STARLIN'S DREADSTAR A JIM-DANDY INTERVIEW!

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VOICES HIS VIEWS ON
VIOLENCE IN COMICS!

FROM FOSTER
TO FRAZETTA
ROY G. KRENKEL
HIS LAST INTERVIEW

COMICS WRITER
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CHATS ABOUT CHANGES!

#4

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S COMICS

INTERVIEW

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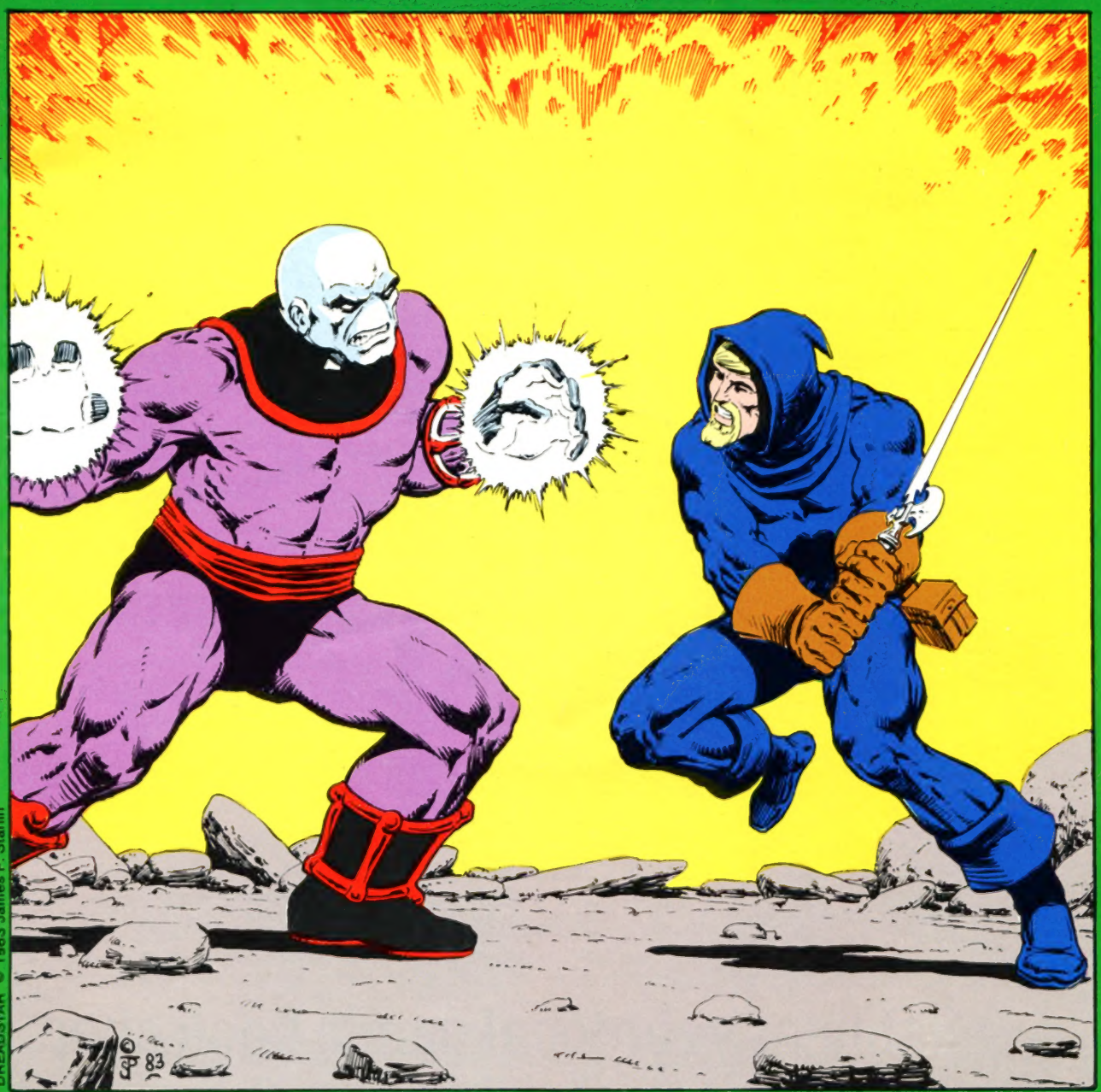

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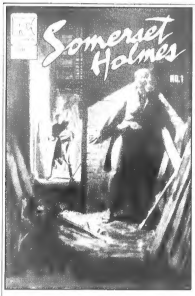

ANNOUNCING A NEW BIMONTHLY COMIC SERIES

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A new kind of comic, a new kind of heroine. Somerset Holmes is a woman locked into a desperate search for her destiny. As the series opens we meet a woman who finds herself beaten, clothes in tatters and dazed without a clue as to who she is! She discovers (the hard way) that she can fend for herself against attackers. The thugs are after her for a reason, and this is the maddening riddle she must solve. For her very life is at stake. She is caught up in an intense web of murder and intrigue—a dangerous maze with twists and turns a plenty that are guaranteed to leave you breathless for more. And you will have more, every other month.

The creative team on *Somerset Holmes* represents two of the finest talents in comics today: writer Bruce Jones and artist Brent Anderson, but this is only the main course. Now, on to the desert.

Regular Back-Up by AL WILLIAMSON!!!

That's right, gang. *Somerset Holmes* will feature a regular back-up feature by none other than Al Williamson, who needs no introduction to fans of great comic art. The strip is called *Chi Ranger*, and features the adventures of a soldier of fortune, set in the 1930s. This is no "Raiders" clone, but classic adventure with the flavor of the old-style pulps. Readers will find our hero up to their ears in trouble and foreign in the Amazon jungle. This feature will be a time machine set for the darkened movie theaters of memory...with an action-packed serial forever on the screen.

The cover to *Somerset Holmes #1* will be a full-color painting by Brent Anderson. This will be a regular bimonthly comic, shipping in June. Thirty-two pages. Hudson cover stock throughout with full laser-scanner process color $1.50

TWISTED TALES #4 JOHN BOLTON

John Bolton contributes a painted cover and an eleven page lead feature titled *The Wall*. Written by Bruce Jones, this story is a real shocker.

Twisted Tales #4 contends:

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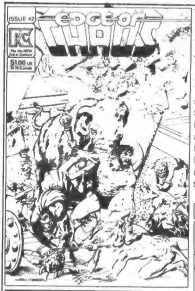
Available at your local comic book shop

June Shipping



EDGE OF CHAOS #2

Things are really hopping in pre-deluge Atlantis as Eric Cleese and his humanoid-mandrill companions battle the full fury of Moloch's genetic mutations. This is adventure in the grand manner, combining sword and sorcery, science and fiction, and a mastery of comic art. Author/Illustrator Gray Morrow is pulling out all the stops on this three-issue mini-series, which will be issued monthly. Here is a mythology for today, rendered in the classic manner. Thirty-two pages on regular stock..... $1.00

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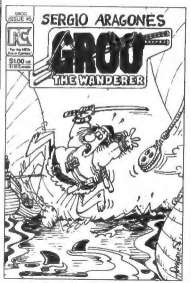
The WANDERER #5
SERGIO ARAGONES

This month Groo finds himself at sea in an adventure featuring pirates. There is a double-page spread that is so alive with swarming hordes that Sergio is coloring it himself. Perhaps he though it would send Gordon Kent around the bend for good. Groo is the funniest direct-sale comic around. Discover why . . . . if you haven't already. Thirty-two pages on regular stock..... $1.00



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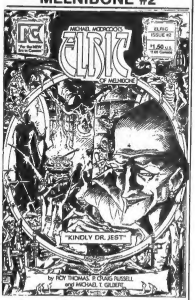

Michael Moorcock's Wizard King is in the hands of three creative talents who understand sword and sorcery and how to translate it into graphic story with flair and style. White "Baxter" stock and full-color, 32 pages. . . $1.50

BERNI WRIGHTSON: Master Of The Macabre #2

Response to our first collection of vintage Berni Wrightson material has been enthusiastic, so we are adding a second full-color collection. Like #1, this book features material originally done for the Warren magazines, newly colored by Steve Oliff utilizing full-process color reproduction. The stories are truly top notch. Featured is Wrightson's "chilling" interpretations of H.P Lovecraft's classic, "Cool Air," an eight pager. The other three stories are the finest examples of the many collaborations between Wrightson and writer Bruce Jones. The stories are "Jennifer" (10 pages), "Clarice" a poem by Jones illustrated by Wrightson (6 pages), and "The Laughing Man." The book is 32 pages, full-color on "Baxter" stock. Publication slated for late in May. —$1.50.

Available at your local comic book shop

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UP FRONT

Right here on these two pages, yet another of the many departments I mentioned way back in issue # 1 finally makes its first appearance. The idea is to ask several interview subjects the same question and then to print their various responses — "Out of Context," as it were.

The reason for the debut owes to the fact that **Steve Gerber**, **Terry Austin** and **Steve Oliff** all address a subject which has threatened to become something of a trend — the Deaths of Superheroes — and this very issue also features an in-depth interview with the man most associated in readers' minds with death in comics, **Jim Starlin.**

Be sure to write and let us know what *you* think. After all, the subject is never truly closed until you folks out there have had "The Last Word."

I have a lot to say, a lot of excitement and enthusiasm to share with you over our new Fictioneer projects like **Mark Gruenwald's** OMNIVERSE (yes, it *is* finally going to appear — soon!) and **Don McGregor's** JAMES BOND 007 book — but I'll save it for next issue.

See you in a short thirty days!

-Dave

OUT OF CONTEXT

THE QUESTION:

People are very concerned about the recent spate of deaths of super-heroes — why do you suppose that is?

THE ANSWERS:

TERRY AUSTIN

Artist

Frank Miller was able to bring back Elektra, but we couldn't bring back Phoenix. Phoenix was purged of all of her evil, and we were told that wasn't sufficient. Either something has changed, or I don't know what's going on. Phoenix has to stay dead, but Elektra, the hired killer, can come back. I'm not saying it's bad that she was brought back, I just wonder about the reason.

For a while I got the impression that readers wanted more death — because they were buying books like crazy that had death in them. I did an X-MEN cover that was a future history issue, wherein the rest of the X-Men got killed — soon after Phoenix died — and I put a blurb on it calling it "The Death of the X-Men." It's only a step away from putting a blurb that says, "This issue everybody dies." Throw subtlety out the window. We want to sell these books.

STEVE OLIFF

Colorist

I say, if they're stale and old characters, why *not* kill them off? Start up something new. If they're not going anywhere, I have no objections. I thought THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN MARVEL was a good story. I thought it was interesting that he got killed by cancer.

STEVE GERBER

Writer

Allowing that thought in can lead the way for equally disturbing thoughts, such as the death of one's parents or of the entire nation.

There's nothing wrong, *per se*, with a superhero's dying. What's begun to happen, though, as a result, I guess, of the tremendous sales of **Starlin's** DEATH OF CAPTAIN MARVEL, is that the companies are starting to view superhero deaths as a new marketing ploy. It's the ultimate trivialization of the ultimate question, isn't it? Especially when, as in the case of Elektra, they still feel they can resurrect the character and exploit it all over again.

I remember reading **Jerry Siegel's** "The Death of Superman" back in the early Sixties and the effect it had on me then. You probably won't believe this, but even though it was clearly labelled an "imaginary story" — a what-if story as they're known today — it really did bring a tear to my eye. Siegel was utterly unabashed about making you *feel* the loss of a worthwhile human being. And when Supergirl captured Luthor, you were hoping like hell she would bash his face to a bloody pulp — and yet admired her when she *didn't*. The trial scene, with Luthor in the glass booth like **Adolph Eichmann**, is unforgettable. The whole story was so unashamedly emotional, it never for an instant seemed like exploitation.

Elektra's death had a similar impact. Restoring her to life, of course, completely eviscerates it. Captain Marvel's death, what with the requisite appearances of every Marvel character, seemed more like a three-ring circus to me. The Big Event. Stunting, as they call it in television.

When it happens for a good reason and it's handled in a serious manner, the occasional death of a superhero may do the audience some good. Allowing that thought in can lead the reader to serious introspection about his own mortality and that of the people closest to him. When it's handled callously and sold for $5.95 in the graphic novel format, one has to wonder what the intent of the artist and the company really is.

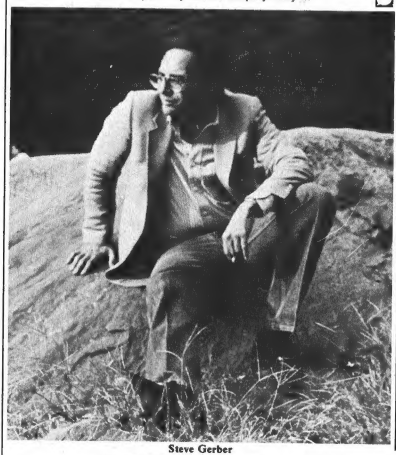

Photo: DAK

Steve Gerber

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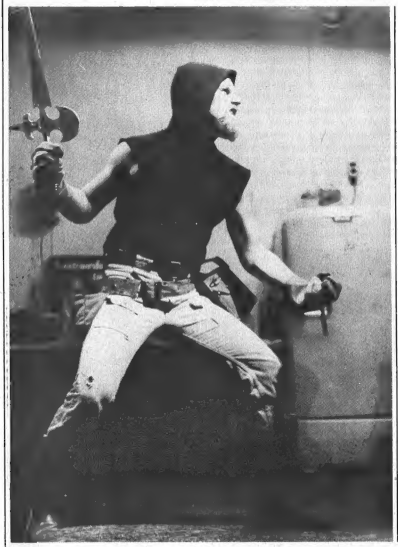
"It sounds like I do nothing but dwell on

Jim Starlin models as Vanth Dreadstar.



Jim Starlin amazes me with his ability to present abstract concepts in comic-book form — and to do it in such a highly entertaining and fun fashion. His WARLOCK series raised philosophical and ethical questions about the self in a rousing science-fiction adventure context — a rarity in comics. And, if DREADSTAR delivers on its promise, the new Epic Comics series could be his best yet.

Jim and I recently sat down at the Marvel Bullpen for a straightforward talk session all about the philosophy and themes underlying and infusing his work . . .

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Jim Starlin
Occupation: Writer/Artist
Residence: Catskill Mountains, NY.
Born: Highland Park, Michigan
Training: Looking at the comic books. I learned most of what I know about art by coming to New York and talking with other artists — seeing how they did their work.
Credits: MASTER OF KUNG FU, IRON MAN, WARLOCK, OMAC, CAPTAIN MARVEL, SUPERMAN, BATMAN, AVENGERS, DREADSTAR, etc.
Pet Peeve: Freelancers who use interviews to blast other freelancers

STARLIN

death . . . I'm really quite a light fellow."

DAK: *I think what everybody wants to know is — what obsesses you so about death?*

JIM STARLIN: Well, it's the main motivator of everything you do in life, basically. You don't do anything in life, really, without thinking somewhere in the back of your mind: "I want to leave this behind, because someday I'm going to die," or: "Do things better because it'll make my life easier before I die." It may not be the main force, but it's always part of you and it's really the ultimate drama. I mean, what's more important than your death or the death of the folks you love?

DAK: *Have you had any close brushes with death?*

JIM: I had a few motorcycle accidents. I was over in Nam for awhile. Had friends and family die. And you know, it's part of my human drama. Maybe it sounds like I'm a morbid character who does nothing but dwell on death — but really I'm quite a light fellow in my better moments.

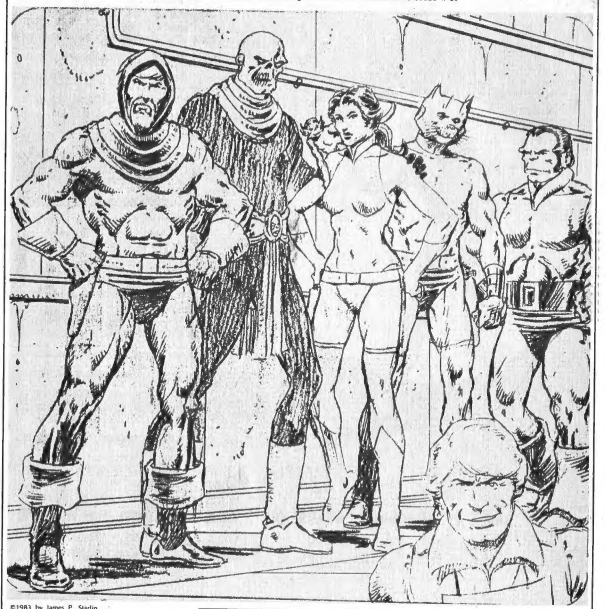
DAK: *Death certainly seems to be the theme in both WARLOCK and CAPTAIN MARVEL, continuing into METAMORPHOSIS ODYSSEY and DREADSTAR.*

JIM: In a way, but differently. It may seem strange right now for me to say this, but DREADSTAR is a much more positive strip than CAPTAIN MARVEL or WARLOCK. They're still playing for the higher stakes, but as it goes along it's going to become apparent that the real theme behind the series is: Anything you believe you can do, you *can* do. You can change the universe — one person.

DAK: *I think that's good. I agree with that. Why do you think THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN MARVEL was so popular?*

JIM: Well, it was the first of a series of graphic novels, which helped sales tremendously. It was about a fellow who

Sample of original Starlin pencils from DREADSTAR #6.



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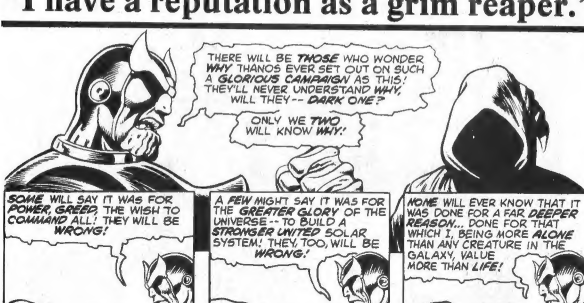
JIM STARLIN

"I have a reputation as a grim reaper."


THERE WILL BE THOSE WHO WONDER WHY THANOS EVER SET OUT ON SUCH A GLORIOUS CAMPAIGN AS THIS! THEY'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND WHY, WILL THEY -- DARK ONE?
ONLY WE TWO WILL KNOW WHY!
SOME WILL SAY IT WAS FOR POWER, GREED, THE WISH TO COMMAND ALL! THEY WILL BE WRONG!
ONLY WE TWO WILL KNOW WHY!
A FEW MIGHT SAY IT WAS FOR THE GREATER GLORY OF THE UNIVERSE -- TO BUILD A STRONGER UNITED SOLAR SYSTEM! THEY, TOO, WILL BE WRONG!
ONLY WE TWO WILL KNOW WHY!
NONE WILL EVER KNOW THAT IT WAS DONE FOR A FAR DEEPER REASON... DONE FOR THAT WHICH I, BEING MORE ALONE THAN ANY CREATURE IN THE GALAXY, VALUE MORE THAN LIFE!
LOVE!

© 1983 MCG

Above: Thanos' romance with death, from CAPTAIN MARVEL #31. Below: From WARLOCK #11.

wasn't going out with an explosion or being riddled by rays or whatever. He was a super man dying of human causes. It's kind of funny, because I had about six plots after they came to me and said, "We want to kill off Captain Marvel — can you do it?" I sat home for three or four months, coming up with plots and going, "That's stupid" — "That's dumb." My father had cancer and we thought he was going to get better at the time. So I started kicking around the idea of Captain Marvel having cancer. As it worked out, I got halfway through the penails and my father finally died of cancer. And so for me doing the story and finishing it off was sort of a catharsis — it was purging myself of a lot of sorrow, I guess you'd call it, that I had inside. I was able to work it out much better than, say, my brother — who let it build up inside him and took months to work it out.

DAK: *I find it interesting that you've created a special niche for yourself. When they want to kill Marvel characters they say, "Hey, let's get Starlin to do it."*

JIM: Yeah, I do have sort of a reputation as a grim reaper around here. It's funny. Just recently, **Denny O'Neil** called me up when they were dropping the MASTER OF KUNG FU book and asked if I wanted to kill off Shang-Chi, too. I don't tend to think of my killing off the characters as being a speciality. It's just that you're dealing in these books with a very heavy-duty game of life and death — it's quite unreal that no one dies most of the time. I don't have any trouble with the characters dying, if it's done right. If it's done just for commercial reasons, I don't like that. That wasn't the reason for killing Captain Marvel. If I couldn't have done it in a way that I felt I was getting something out of it — and doing a good job — I wouldn't have done it just for the money.

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DAK: *Is that Superman on the back cover, paying his respects?*

JIM: There's somebody with a spit-curl on the back. I can't say it's Superman, or anybody else — you understand why.

DAK: *Right. How does it feel to have created one of the most powerful villains in comics today, ranking with Darkseid and Dr. Doom? I'm speaking of Thanos, of course.*

JIM: It feels good. He was fun. He was always one of my favorite characters. In fact, my two favorite characters are Thanos and Pip the Troll, up to this point. Thanos originates from some very strange

"There is nothing free. There's a price that

BUT THE CONTEST IS OVER AND SHE COMES FOR YOU.
ARE YOU READY FOR HER?
AS READY AS I GUESS I'LL EVER BE
SHE IS THE BRIDGE TO ETERNITY. HER CARESS IS PEACE.
DO NOT FEAR HER FOR SHE IS MERELY THAT WHICH AWAITS US ALL.
IT IS NOT THAT I FEAR HER.
IT'S JUST THAT...
I NO LONGER NEED...
...THE ILLUSION.
SO IT ENDS...

© 1983 MCG

Captain Marvel welcomes the icy embrace of death — from THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN MARVEL graphic novel.

you have to pay for whatever you do."

places — among them a psych course that I had in college. **Roy Thomas** felt that letting me do the Titan series in CAPTAIN MARVEL was going to show DC how to do the NEW GODS series that had flopped at that point. Thanos went through some strange metamorphoses before he finally showed up. Originally, he was a very skinny, dark-looking character who everyone at Marvel thought would look better if he were plumped up a little more. And so I went berserk and made him the size of a mountain, of course. He was fun. He had a lot of nice, interesting facets. I hope I can repeat the quality of those facets with the Lord Papal right now in the DREADSTAR series.

DAK: *Gee, that was my next question. Do you think there's a comparable antagonist in DREADSTAR or anything else you've done since?*

JIM: Lord Papal is going to be. He doesn't have the same motivations. The obvious ones are his lust for power, but I'm going to set it up that he had this horrible childhood and adolescence, which will really show why he's as bent — as twisted — as he is. Some of the later issues will show how crazy and berserk he is. He's a very twisted character. In the third issue, he nuked a city of fifteen million people, just to get at Dreadstar. It's like Dreadstar and he are playing this intergalactic chess game. Dreadstar's got the finesse, but Lord Papal has no mercy and all the power. He's an unpredictable and dangerous foe — and maybe even an interesting character, if I'm lucky.

DAK: *You're both writer and artist of DREADSTAR. How do you work?*

JIM: I used to do Marvel-style strictly and I always had trouble, because I'd have my drawings in front of me and they became sort of graven images that I really hated to change. Yet when I started scripting, a lot of times I found that what I wanted to write was not down there in the drawings. So I've started doing little thumbnail drawings, eight of them to a loose-leaf sheet, which are the page breakdowns. This gives me a chance to change my story three times along the way. I do it once in thumbnails. If I'm scripting as I go along and find there's a problem, hey, I don't have to redraw anything. I can just change it and add another panel or something. Then, when I start doing the penciling, if I find that the script isn't working with the art, I can make a last minute change in the script. So by the time I've got it down to the point where it's lettered, I have about as lean and clean a story as I can possibly do.

DAK: *Once, quite a few years ago. I copyedited a script you wrote by hand on notebook paper for CAPTAIN MARVEL. I remember that it needed cleaning up —*

JIM: I'm the worst speller they have here at Marvel.

DAK: *What amazed me was that the story, which is what really counts, was so strong. I've always felt that you can get somebody to clean up the copy — spelling and grammar — if you have that instinctive grasp for telling a story. I know Annette Kawecki used to do that for you when she lettered . . .*

JIM: Tom Orzechowski, too.

DAK: *And I was wondering, now that you're putting this book together all on your own, who edits you?*

JIM: My spelling's gotten better. And I have **Jo Duffy** now, who goes over my script before it goes to a letterer. She says I'm improving all the time. She was amazed, about a month ago, to find that I had actually turned in ten pages and there was only one spelling mistake. But we go through the regular editing process. If there's a change, she'll give me a call.

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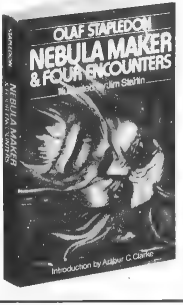

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"You can't write the Great American Novel

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DAK: *Well, I must say that I found Jo Duffy to be one of the better editors I've ever had at Marvel. I think that surprised me, because I didn't know what to expect when she ended up editing the SHE-HULK. She has a real good sense of what can improve a story.*

JIM: I agree with you totally. I expected her to be trouble. I was really quite worried about that. But she and Archie and I just get along famously. I don't think I work better with anybody than those two. You know, my second favorite is **Al Milgrom,** but **Archie Goodwin** and Jo are really at the top of my list at this point.

DAK: *How do you think your art and storytelling have changed since the days of DR. WEIRD?*

JIM: Hopefully, I've learned to draw a little bit better and write a little better. That's basically it, you know. My roots were established when I was doing DR. WEIRD for Texas Trio fanzines down in Texas.

DAK: *Actually, I thought the DEATH OF CAPTAIN MARVEL artwork most closely resembled your early DR. WEIRD stuff...*

JIM: There's a good reason for it. I broke my hand in the middle of the job!

DAK: *It was the anatomy and inking, mostly, that seemed somehow lacking.*

JIM: Yeah, possibly because of the trouble with the hand. I dislocated my middle finger at a volley ball game and I couldn't ink with a pen and ink — so I had to do it all with felt tips. The felt tips bleed just a little bit, and gave it sort of a little fuzzy look. **Gil Kane,** who inks with felt tips, seems to be able to avoid that — I didn't manage it. Maybe that was why it looks, you know, that crude.

DAK: *How important do you think anatomy is in comics?*

JIM: It's not absolutely essential. Some of the best people in this business fake their anatomy — **Jack Kirby,** for instance. It's all slashes. One of the best artists in the business right now is **Berni Wrightson** — who really doesn't know where anything goes, but he slaps it together so well that it looks right, you know? I mean, Berni himself will admit that he's faking it. Yet it looks right. I mean, I *believe* Hannover Fist, but if you went and tried to connect anything up on Hannover Fist, you'd realize his skin has all sorts of things stuck underneath it, like apples and old cans and bottles — he couldn't move, the way he looks. The person who's got the best feel for anatomy in this business is probably **John Buscema.** He thoroughly incorporates anatomy into his work, but it doesn't enslave him. If he's got to hedge on the anatomy to get a composition to work, he'll do it in such a way that it's

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and make it work within a comic book."

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MY FINAL MOMENTS ARE UPON ME! I AM DYING AND YOU HAVE COME TO STEAL MY SOUL SO THAT IT WILL NEVER BECOME THE FOE I DEFEATED THOSE LONG MONTHS AGO!
MONTHS... I DIDN'T REALIZE IT HAD HAPPENED SUCH A SHORT TIME AGO!
SHORT TIME?! YOU FOOL, IT'S BEEN AN ETERNITY!
DURING THAT TIME, EVERYTHING I'VE EVER CARED FOR OR ACCOMPLISHED HAS FALLEN INTO RUIN! EVERYONE I'VE EVER LOVED NOW LIES DEAD!
MY LIFE HAS BEEN A FAILURE!
I WELCOME ITS END!

SOME OF STARLIN'S FAVORITE SEQUENCES

Top left: The confrontation with Willow and Syzygy, from DREADSTAR #2. Above: A scene from the strange double-death of Adam Warlock, from WARLOCK #11. Bottom left and below: Thanos displays his bedside manner, from THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN MARVEL.

believable.

I've talked to other folks who come from a certain school of thought — who believe anatomy is everything and who will sacrifice composition and storytelling for it. These are comic books — this is supposed to be a combination of storytelling and art. There has to be compromise between the two. You can't write the Great American Novel and make it work within a comic book, because you'll squeeze out all the room for the visuals. On the other hand, if you haven't got any story — just ideal visuals — it becomes dull, too, because there's no meat to it. I really think that cartooning is such a hard thing to get right, mostly because it's a collaboration among people who have gigantic egos, each of whom is really hard-pressed to sacrifice anything of his own to make the rest of the job work. That's why I find working by myself is so easy — because I *have* to sacrifice. I have no choice. The person I'm working with is myself, and if I don't do it right, I have bad times at night trying to sleep. So, I've probably got it easier than most folks.

DAK: *What are some sequences that you're happiest with in all of your work?*

JIM: The deathbed scenes in THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN MARVEL. The aftermath scenes from the third issue of DREADSTAR. The confrontation scenes with Willow and Syzygy in the second issue of DREADSTAR. Warlock's double death, in that series. The first issue of KUNG FU. Those are the ones that pop to mind.

DAK: *Do you agree that design is your strongest suit?*

JIM: Not really. I don't see that myself. You know, I have to work at design. Some people who I think are strong in design are **Walt Simonson** and **Frank Miller.** My strong point is storytelling. It's getting the ideas across as best I can, as powerfully as I can. Which I think is a little bit different from actually designing the page. My design of a page is really kind of standard and a lot like **Jack Kirby** and **Steve Ditko** — in a lot of ways I'm very much a 1960s artist.

DAK: *I was thinking back to scenes from WARLOCK where you'd have the profiles running down the side of a page and you'd have him standing by himself soliloquizing.*

JIM: But if you look at it, most of the book was still six or nine panels a page. The storytelling was very standard. Also, there was a lot of that strange kind of design stuff going on at the time, which I promptly jumped into. I try to work that stuff in whenever I can — but once I get going, I'll sacrifice the design of the page to tell the story right. Although, I just

I'VE ALWAYS HAD GREAT RESPECT FOR YOU, MAR-VELL
YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN MY GREATEST FOE, MY ARCH NEMESIS
FOR ONE SUCH AS YOU, DEATH SHOULD NOT COME GNAWING LIKE SOME VERMIN
FOR YOU DEATH SHOULD BE...
...A GLORIOUS EVENT.

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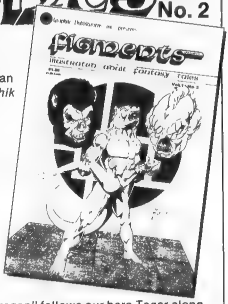

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Previous ads have pictured *Figments 2* as an 8½ x 11 magazine selling for $2.95. Since *Graphik Publikations, Inc.* has completely taken over *Figments*, the format has been changed to a 32-page, 7 x 10 format selling for $1.25 with a 4-color enamel cover and 60# offset interior pages.

In the second issue of *Figments*, Gideon Starchild is featured in the second of a four-parter—"Murder at Madame Bhok's." Cliff Van Meter and Peter give us the 4-color cover, while Van Meter and David Tanguay plot and pencil Starchild's adventures. The 16-page story finds Starchild and his crew trying to get a confession out of an assassin for the murder of one of Madame Bhok's girls.

The 10-page backup story *"Blood of the Dragon"* follows our hero Tagar along life's pathway. Tagar's journey is chronicled by Dennis Sellers and penciled and embellished by Frenchman Gerald M. Forton, an artist-illustrator of the old school. Forton's work has appeared in a number of European publications.

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"Belief is so important in life."

finished designing a page for the fifth issue of DREADSTAR, where this huge monsterman takes a fall — I'm kind of happy with the design of that one.

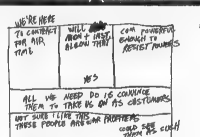
DAK: *What's the theme of DREADSTAR?*

JIM: It has several of them — it's sort of a morality play, in its own way. It's Evil vs. Not-So-Evil. The Evil is the Monarchy-Instrumentality. The Not-So-Evil is our heroes. You know, quote, "heroes." They're not *really* heroes — they're just five imperfect people trying to put together something that works in a universe that's not working at all.

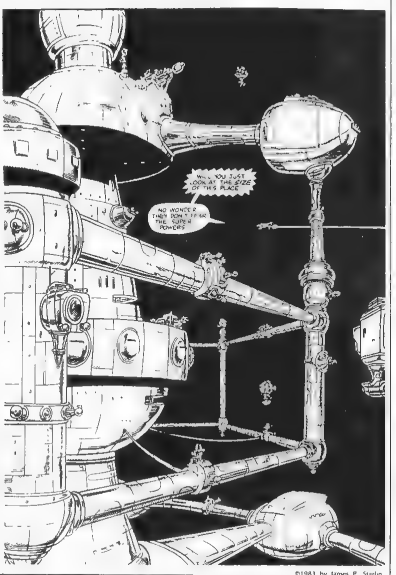
Another one of the themes is belief. Belief is so important in life. We had a Dreadstar story, EPIC ILLUSTRATED #15, where he has to pull this rock off a woman, who turns out to be Willow. She's pinned underneath it, and no one believes that Vanth can do it. Even Oedi, who knows him fairly well, doesn't believe he can do it — because it's beyond anything he's exercised himself to do up to this point. But he just fires himself up with belief and actually lifts the rock. I think this is an important thing to communicate now. I mean, we have an obligation as writers of mass culture, or whatever you want to call comics. We have to put someting back into the system that's giving us a living.

I think it's important to give a positive message — that things *can* be better than they are right now, telling the kid who is reading these stories at fifteen that if he believes hard enough, he can get to wherever he wants to be when he gets older. I was born in Detroit and I wanted to be a cartoonist and everybody thought I was nuts. I remember taking my — they called it an aptitude test, back in high school. I'd been working in gas stations, stuff like that, so my aptitude test immediately said I should become a mechanic. I was horrified by this and had a lot of trouble with teachers who were trying to get me into engineering courses. They thought the idea of drawing comics was a pipe dream — but I believed it.

I started drawing comics just because I kept on believing it and didn't let myself get shaken all that badly, to the point where I stopped believing. I think this kind of thing holds true with most anybody. I've seen people who are handicapped, who've been told they'll never work again, and they're out there fulfilling their life's functions because they didn't believe the nonsense folks were telling them. And that's what I'm trying to do with DREADSTAR to a certain extent — tell people that, if you have the belief inside you, you can go out and do it. I'm beginning to sound preachy.


WE'RE HERE
TO CONTACT THE AIR. MAN
WILL ANGH + HOST ALREADY THERE
COM. PROVIDUS GAMBIT TO PROTECT MARKERS
#5
ALL WE NEED DO IS CONVINCE THEM TO TAKE US ON ITS CUSTOMERS
BUT SURE I LIKE THIS THOSE PEOPLE ARE SUCH PROPHETS
COULD SEE THEM AS GOD
WE TOO SHOULD BE ABLE TO CONVINCE THE PEOPLE THERE
YES SYNDROME
I'M NOT HANDLE ALL MISCHIEF
WE'RE HERE
WILLOW WITH THE GIANT BARTER
DO YOU ARE HERE AS BROOKS
GOOD LORD
GIANT SPACE SATILITE
NO WONDER THEY NO LONGER FEAR. THE HIT + MON.

Above: The first step — sample page breakdowns for DREADSTAR #5 from Starlin's notebook. Below: The finished work.



"I'm trying to say our leaders don't have

DAK: *No, I like it. I agree.*

JIM: The other theme is humanity. I don't want to have any perfect characters. All my heroes have clay feet, basically. Vanth Dreadstar is probably the most perfect one of the group — and he's riddled with guilt. He's got that burden of the destruction of the Milky Way Galaxy on his back. He's a little bit crazy, but he's going to actually do something good out of the whole thing. Maybe I'm trying to say that our leaders don't have to be perfect, they have to be human.

DAK: *What's the theme of METAMORPHOSIS ODYSSEY?*

JIM: It's that sometimes you're caught in situations where you don't want to do what you think is right — because it's going to cost. This goes back to believing. Anything you believe you can do, you *can* do — but there is nothing free. There's a price that you have to pay for whatever you do. If you want to accomplish something, you've got to get yourself out of a comfort zone — make life uncomfortable for yourself — to be able to do it. For every action in this universe, there is a reaction. Take a look at politics. If a politician wants to do what is right, you'll often find a huge constituency of the people he represents — who voted him into office — are going to object to his doing what his conscience will say is right. He can either stay in the comfort zone and go along with whatever pressure group is pushing him, or he can do what he thinks is right and lose some votes. It's all a trade-off. He can either stay very safe and comfortable and never do anything — or he can prepare to pay the price and go out there.

DAK: *Which is also sort of the theme of one character . . .*

JIM: Syzygy.

DAK: *Yeah. In fact, I was going to ask you how that's pronounced.*

JIM: Just the way it's spelled. Sounds like Sizziggy. Syz, they call him, for short. That's his nickname.

DAK: *Sort of S-i-z-z, Sizz?*

JIM: Yeah.

DAK: *Where do you get names like Skeevo Flatus?*

JIM: Well, Skeevo is a New York term. It means, in street terms, icky, not clean, scuzzy. It has a lot to do, I think, with pimples. Flatus — well, it's not spelled the same way, but flatulence naturally means gas escaping the body. And I wanted a character who was very earthy and somewhat silly and that's where it came from. My wife and I took a walk in the rain out in Queens one day and we came up with a whole family of names. It turns out Skeevo's got a wife called Ghurgl Flatus.

DAK: *How's that spelled?*

JIM: I haven't worked that one out yet. G-h-u-r-g-l, you know, something like that. He has a brother called Biato Flatus, which is spelled exactly the way it sounds. And there's a whole bunch of other Flatuses that'll be coming along — including a certain sorceress Flatus, who will be appearing in a script that **Berni Wrightson's** doing as an irregular back-up strip for the DREADSTAR book. He'll be doing a series called — this week it's called "Interstellar Toybox" — it may be changed by the time we actually go into print.

DAK: *How about the backgrounds on some of the other names?*

JIM: Well, Syzygy is basically the lining up of the planets in conjunction with the sun. It's an astrological term. His last name, Darklock, was just sort of tagged

to be perfect, they have to be human."

on in case anybody had trouble with Syzygy — they could call him Darklock. Vanth's a Greek god, as I recall, of death. So I picked up on that. Dreadstar got tacked on to give it a more pronounceable name, because **Jim Shooter** never could remember Vanth.

DAK: *Doesn't the name Vanth Dreadstar sound awfully similar to Darth Vader with his Deathstar?*

JIM: Didn't think of it at the time. I guess maybe he does sound sort of derivative. Originally, we were going to call him Vanth the Starslayer, but after mentioning this to somebody, I got a call from **Mike Grell,** who was about to come out with a book titled STARSLAYER. I needed a name real quick so that we could have something to put on the cover of the graphic novel and Dreadstar came to mind.

DAK: *Is DREADSTAR an open-ended series?*

JIM: The current storyline will probably go anywhere from twenty to thirty issues. It's a continuing series, although the stories will be complete in themselves. I'm trying to write DREADSTAR so you can pick up any issue and follow it. But there is a progression as it goes along. It's basically going to breakdown to those who want to be free, fighting against the forces of Lord Papal, the Twelve Gods, the Instrumentality — it's a lot of schemes, before we get to the point.

DAK: *Is that, perhaps, yet another theme?*

JIM: Schemes within schemes? Well, yes. I'm trying to make this a little bit, well — using the term realistic to talk about science fiction is kind of strange. But I am trying to make it a little more realistic than a normal comic book. There are no clean-cut victories for anybody.

Most superheroes in comics identify the force they want to overcome as being evil, and it comes down basically to a lot of muscle power beating up the bad guys. Dreadstar and company have a lot of muscle power — but because of the way their universe is set up, they can't just go in there and muscle the Lord Papal out of power. The reasons for this will be revealed as we go along — the main reason is that Lord Papal is backed by the Twelve Gods of the Instrumentality, which actually exist. Also, if Dreadstar were to just kick him out of office, there would be an immediate martyrdom of the Instrumentality. Everyone would flock to the Instrumentality's defense, because it's a religion being persecuted. Whether it's a good religion or not, there'd be a flocking of support for it. That's why Dreadstar can't just go in there and lop off the Lord Papal's head.

It'll eventually break down to a confrontation between them — but only after their universe has been rearranged by Dreadstar so that he can afford this confrontation. I'm probably going to get lots of letters, by the way, saying, "Hey, when's Dreadstar going to fight the Lord Papal?" Well, it's not going to happen for awhile. He'll fight other people in the meantime, but as for the Lord Papal and Dreadstar actually facing each other — not for a long time.

DAK: *Well, if it takes maybe thirty issues to get to the resolution, does that mean the DREADSTAR series is then going to come to an end?*

JIM: The Instrumentality Monarchy conflict will be resolved. I have a set conclusion, a definite ending. Whether that's the end of DREADSTAR at that time will depend on a lot of things — on sales of the book, my attitude towards continuing, whether I have more ideas in my head, floating around. Whether I'll even have the energy to continue, after that point, is another question. It may come to a point where it's out of my hands and DREADSTAR becomes a pretty big success, a phenomenal success. Then I would not be able to end DREADSTAR, just because it will have a life of its own.

DAK: *I noticed the first issue moved at a breakneck pace, I guess because you had to explain a lot of what had gone before . . .*

This page: Starlin pencils for DREADSTAR #6.

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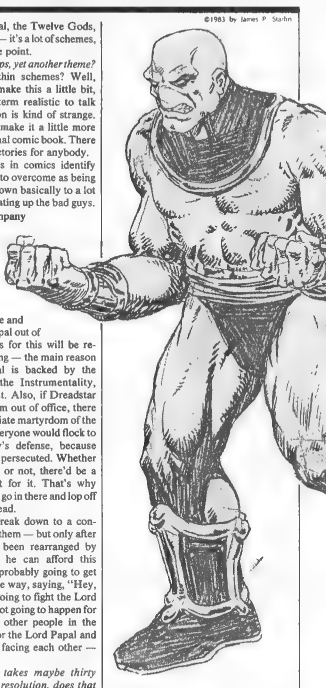

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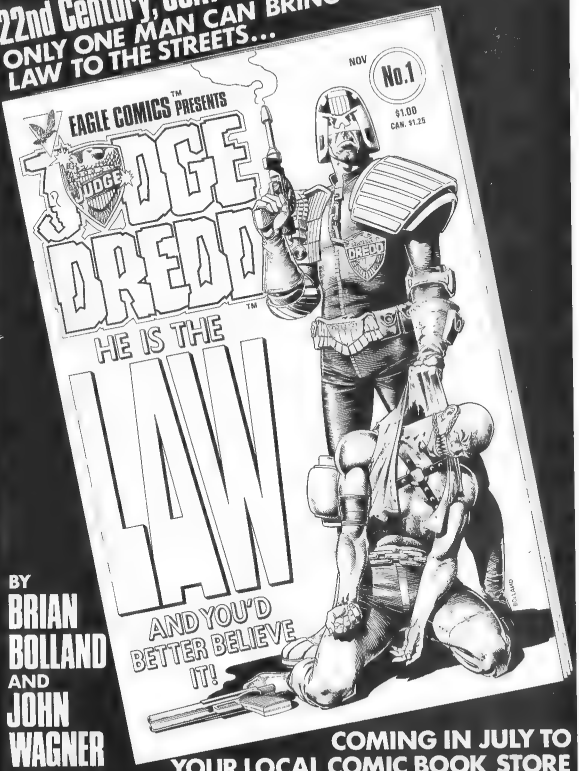

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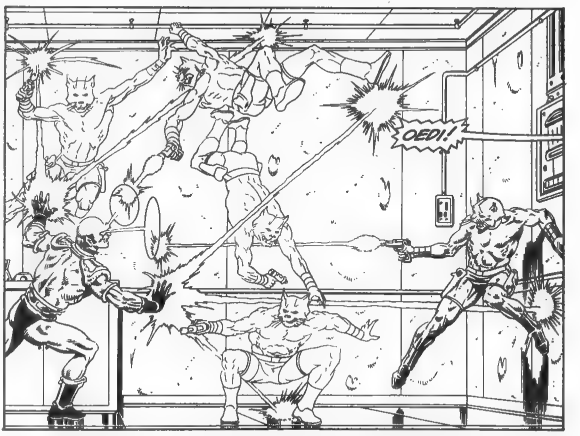

Oedi in action — scenes from DREADSTAR #5. "Oedi is based on my two cats, Electra and Eddie."

JIM: About two hundred pages worth of METAMORPHOSIS ODYSSEY material, yes.

DAK: *The several issues that followed #1 sort of slowed down a bit. Are you going to be varying the pace?*

JIM: There will be very different story types. The second and third issues are very intense stories. The fourth issue is a progression of the plot, that I had to have in order to get to "Plan M" (which is not going to be revealed until the sixth issue). The fifth issue is a comedy story. It features Skeevo and Oedi saving Syzygy. The sixth issue will be the revelation of "Plan M" and of how Dreadstar will set up the universe to be able to end the Instrumentality's reign. It's a little complicated, but I think I'm going to enjoy the ride as we go along.

DAK: *Do you have an outline?*

JIM: I have a lot of it in my head. I'm usually about five issues ahead of what I'm doing, complete with characters I've made up and stories built around them — which doesn't mean that they're actually going to happen. I had six issues all plotted out in my head when I did number one, and every one of the stories changed as I got closer to it. In fact, the Skeevo/Oedi issue, which is now number five, was originally supposed to be a very grim piece featuring Dreadstar — but the closer I came to it, the more I liked the idea of making it very whimsical and featuring Oedi and Skeevo. So it was basically the same plot — but with a very different ending.

DAK: *Do you ever get part way through a story, maybe having written it, and then change it completely?*

JIM: The only time I did that was with the first issue of DREADSTAR. That was a real complicated story to write. I had a lot of stuff that I had to recap. I did about six or seven pages and scrapped them, because it just wasn't working, and started over.

DAK: *Do you pattern any of your characters after real-life counterparts?*

JIM: On METAMORPHOSIS ODYSSEY I worked from photos so while a lot of the characters were not based on anybody, their features were. I used **Val Mayerik** as the model for **Aknaton**, put a bald skull-cap on him and had him dance around in this black leotard and shirt. He always felt terribly foolish, but he worked out to be a great model. For Vanth, I used myself as a model. I had a Van Dyke at the time, and I'd jump around the studio with a squeeze ball in my hand, taking pictures. Juliet from the series was **Lynn Varley**, the colorist.

"If I brought back any of those old Marvel

HEY! IT'S YOUR FAVORITE DEGENERATE, PIP THE TROLL. COME TO CALL.
YOU'VE PROBABLY HEARD THAT, OF LATE, THIS DISTRICT HAS BEEN HIT WITH A SERIES OF ROBBERIES.
IT'S COME TO MY ATTENTION THAT THIS MYSTERY CULPRIT'S ACTIVITIES BEGAN ABOUT THE SAME TIME AS YOUR ARRIVAL IN THIS AREA.
SURELY YOU DON'T THINK...
...I HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THOSE THEFTS.
CONSTABLE, IS THIS THE FACE...
...OF A CROOK?
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Pip from AVENGERS ANNUAL #7 and patter from WARLOCK #15.

DAK: *She's coloring Miller's RONIN.*
JIM: Right. Which also brings up **Frank Miller,** who was the model for Juliet's father. I used **Jim Sherman.** I even used the superintendent of the studio we had at the time. I grabbed him from the hallway, told him to sit down, and he became Juliet's grandfather. He had no idea what was going on.

DAK: *How about inspirations for the personalities of the characters?*
JIM: Well, Oedi is based upon my two cats, Electra and Eddie. I promised Electra I'd make her a star, so I used her features and Eddie's name. As far as actual personalities, rather than real models, they're based on traits that I need to get the story across.

For Vanth, I needed a schemer, someone who was a little bit fatalistic — felt doomed — believed in nothing but himself and his faith that he could make things better. Because the story needed mysticism, we had Syzygy. They needed conscience, and so Oedi became their conscience. Oedi's the most human character in the book. I've always avoided

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characters, it would be Pip the Troll."

Vanth finally gets a head, so to speak — pencils from DREADSTAR #6.

writing women in the past, because I've seen them handled so poorly in comic books. I wanted a character who would grow as the series went on — and that's what I'm trying to do with Willow. She's starting off very vulnerable and young, and while I'm not going to use her problems as a cross that she has to bear, they are going to motivate her onward — and by the time the series ends, she's probably going to be the strongest character. Skeevo came about because I needed comedy relief. Dreadstar is pretty grim at times, so I need Skeevo to balance against him, the way I had Pip balance things against Warlock.

DAK: *When is Pip the Troll going to get his own graphic novel?*

JIM: If I brought back any of those old Marvel characters, it would be Pip the Troll. I kicked that idea around several times. But I don't think it'd be a good one, because that'd leave the gate open for bringing back Warlock, which I don't want to see happen.

DAK: *Will Berni Wrightson's back-up feature appear in every issue?*

JIM: It's going to be irregular. It'll start in issue number six, and be in number seven, also, I think — and whenever Berni gets one in, I'll do a twenty-four page story and slip it in back.

DAK: *Are you coordinating the back-up stories?*

JIM: No. They're not going to have any real connection with the main storyline. They take place in the same massive

From AVENGERS ANNUAL #7.

universe, but they don't always take place in the Empirical Galaxy where the DREADSTAR series is set. There's not going to be much crossover, really. I think Skeevo will appear in a couple of those "Interstellar Toybox" stories. But they'll not really have anything to do with the central storyline of DREADSTAR. It's a humor strip. Berni's doing the writing and drawing. It looks really nice and it's quite silly.

DAK: *How do you think comics have changed from when you first started reading them until today — when you're doing them, yourself?*

JIM: Sometimes they're better, sometimes they're not. It's always seemed that there was a large percentage of comics that weren't as good as the best and that's always held true. Even the bad comics have gotten better than what they once were. I think I see the whole field progressing. I'm hoping we'll see the day where we have a top-selling author who becomes famous *because* he wrote a comic book that was so good. I think writing has been comics' biggest problem. The trouble with writing in the past has been that a writer — to survive — had to write, write, write, write and continue to write all the time. About four or five books a month. Now, someone like **Chris Claremont** does not have to do five or six books a month. He can write just one or two series and make a living at it. He can have time to think. That's great, because that's the kind of set-up that will eventually get us our **Ernest Hemingway** of the comic books — our **James Joyce.**

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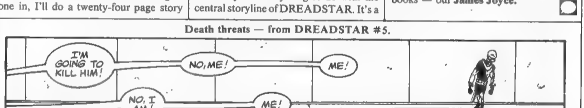
Death threats — from DREADSTAR #5.



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"Frazetta'd look at me with his baby-blues

ROY G. KRENKEL

During the early afternoon of Febuary 24, Roy G. Krenkel passed away at the age of 63. His two-year fight with cancer had finally come to a close. Unparalleled in his field, he died one of the most respected fantasy artists of this century.

Roy Krenkel started, like so many fantasy artists, in comics. His tenure in the field began and ended so long ago that most comic readers today do not know his name. Roy worked at E.C. Although he rarely did a full comic's worth of pencils on his own ("Too damn much time. They wanted everything too quick — collaboration was the only way. Everybody had to help everybody."), he did do a sizeable body of work there, mostly teaming with Al Williamson, Wally Wood, and others in the E.C. stable.

Roy's days as background penciler were numbered by the company's lack of concern for quality and demands for increased production rates. Shortly after leaving E.C., Roy found himself work doing the covers for a number of historical novels, as well as interior illustrations for many of the science-fiction magazines of the '50s.

This work brought him to Donald Wollheim's notice, and a long series of Ace paperback covers in the late '50s and early '60s ("Ah, Tarzan — now there's a character. Burroughs couldn't write, I mean, not really write, but he sure gave us a lot of great stuff to draw — I mean great stuff."). After his enthusiasm for cover painting waned, he concentrated his efforts on handling the artistic chores for a long string of illustrated novels.

Over the years, many young artists turned to Roy for instruction, advice and criticism. The range of people who heeded his lessons is wide, grouping such diverse talents as Mike Kaluta, James Warhola, Bil Stout, and a few dozen others —none more famous, however, than Roy's long-time friend, Frank Frazetta.

Despite his artistic abilities, which were considerable, the thing that often drew people to Roy was his outlook. Unhackled by pretension, he would give his work to anyone who truly admired it. At conventions, although his reputation could have commanded much higher prices, he would sell his drawings for pocket change, happy to see the buyers delight at having made a great deal. ("What's all the noise for? If I need more drawings, I'll just do more drawings. I'm an artist, not a business.")

Roy was dearly loved by everyone who got to know him, a feat which merely took looking his number up in the phone book and calling him. He would talk to anyone, at almost any time, letting work sit for hours, passing the time in conversation, instead.

Photo. Rick Bryant

and say, 'You're an artist, aren't you?'"

"Agents are in business to latch onto people

The following interview is the last Roy was ever able to give. He liked to talk, but disliked interviews, listing facts he felt no one was interested in. It may have been that — after years of avoiding interviewers — he gave this one to make sure the record was straight, knowing he might not get another chance.

Rick Bryant and I were both close friends of Roy's. He always felt that if he had to be interviewed, it should be done by an artist and not a writer ("Writers want to know how you think, artists want to know how you draw — it's as simple as that."). I'm glad things worked out the way he wanted.

– C. J. Henderson

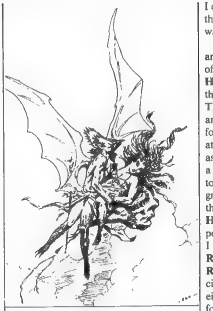
RICK BRYANT: *This is an interview for Dave Kraft's magazine. We're on 110th Street on the West Side of Manhattan island on a bright, sunny day. Why are you smiling?*

ROY KRENKEL: Why not?

RICK: *How did you get started?*

ROY: I suppose collecting and looking at pictures drawn by others, like **J. Allen St. John** . . . fantasy art, adventure, stuff like that. Eventually, I started to dabble. I probably started drawing stuff like theirs, or copying their work. Somewhere down the line, I started getting tighter and tighter and more and more accurate. I would copy photographs. I wasn't studing to — heaven forbid! — make money, or anything practical.

RICK: *What kind of training were you getting?*



Drawing for PIRATES OF VENUS cover painting, Ace edition.

ROY: I was just fiddling around. It was just a hobby — a pastime. By the time I was a teenager, I was doing this stuff — but not commercially.

Then during the War, during Over The Hill time and things like that, I was drawing — but again with no intent behind it. Eventually, at the end of the war, with the G.I. Bill, you could get a year and a half of free tuition, so I went to art school.

I can't say that I learned much there, but the atmosphere with all the young guys was great.

Further down the line, **Al Williamson** and I met. There's the well-known story of Al seeing me thumbing through an old **Hal Foster** — well, they weren't old at that time, they were current — TARZAN. This was at art school. He accosted me and I accosted him right back and we found a common bond in **Foster.** He was at that time doing a little work for **Hogarth,** assisting him and at the same time running a school. We thought that all we had to do to be President was keep our noses to the grindstone, work for about ten years, get the hang of the whole thing, and we'd be **Harold Foster.** It was a pretty naive period, but everybody enjoyed themselves. I would up doing backgrounds for Hal.

RICK: *Pencils or inks or both?*

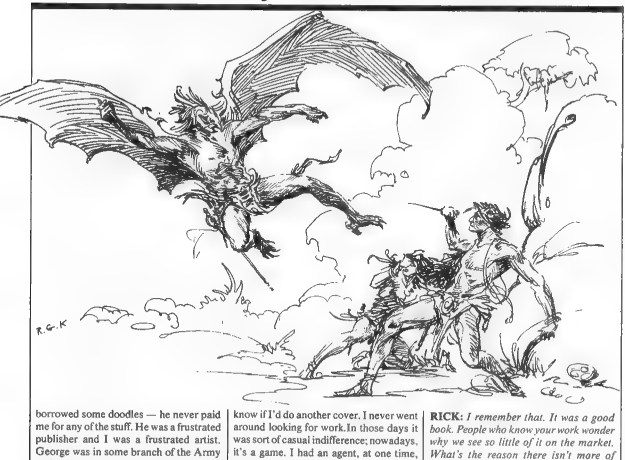
ROY: Pencilling the machinery in funny cities. I might do two panels or fifteen or eighteen. I have no idea what they paid for a comic story in those days, but if there were sixty panels and you did fourteen, we'd split up, say, a hundred dollars for the work we'd done. It was enough money to go to the movies and buy a magazine — an issue of DOC SAVAGE or whatever.

What more was there in life?

That lasted for a number of years, then I wound up doing backgrounds with **Wallace Wood.** Never inks, just pencils. I couldn't handle a brush.

Somewhere down the line, **George Scithers** got a hold of me — for the life of me, I don't know for what reason. He

who are already famous and monied."

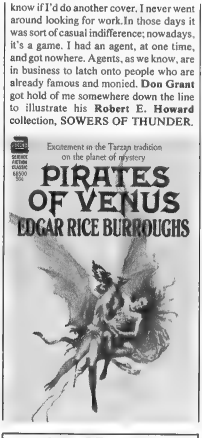


borrowed some doodles — he never paid me for any of the stuff. He was a frustrated publisher and I was a frustrated artist. George was in some branch of the Army and money was no great problem. It was a sideline thing — his fanzine, AMRA — which suggests that CONAN must have hit the scene at the time AMRA came out. He was familiar with a variety of people like **Don Grant** and **Don Wollheim.** George would look through piles of these doodles and use them very appropriately, nicely spaced, in AMRA.

Still later on, **Wollheim** got in touch with me and wanted me to try my hand at a cover painting for a paperback. He's a very affable guy. Don was always picking up people who didn't know which end of a pencil to sharpen, and putting them to work. He'd get some good guys that way, and he'd get some bums that way, too. Anyway, there I was, making enough money to go to the movies and buy DOC SAVAGE, so I didn't want to do serious work like a cover, but he talked me into it. The one I did was pretty piss-poor, let's face it — but there was no real competition at the time.

RICK: *It was an open market for you.*

ROY: It was an open market. I finally did a few more and got better. One thing led to another, and every time I did a cover, I'd get called up by someone else wanting to know if I'd do another cover. I never went around looking for work. In those days it was sort of casual indifference; nowadays, it's a game. I had an agent, at one time, and got nowhere. Agents, as we know, are in business to latch onto people who are already famous and monied. **Don Grant** got hold of me somewhere down the line to illustrate his **Robert** E. **Howard** collection, SOWERS OF THUNDER.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RICK: *I remember that. It was a good book. People who know your work wonder why we see so little of it on the market. What's the reason there isn't more of your work out there?*

ROY: I haven't tried.

RICK: *Why?*

ROY: For the same reason that made me buy DOC SAVAGE and go to the movies instead of applying myself. Seriously, I've given considerable thought to the matter.

RICK: *I understand there's a book being compiled of your sketches and doodles.*

ROY: Yeah, another one. **George Scithers,** who published CITIES AND SCENES, has it in production. The title alone is worth the price — SWORDSMEN AND SAURIANS. It's a general compilation of my stuff.

RICK: *And no one has seen these pieces before in print?*

ROY: Most of them are new. It's supposed to be half again bigger than CITIES AND SCENES.

RICK: *How will it be distributed?*

ROY: Better than the last one, let us hope.

RICK: *What happened with the last one?*

ROY: Again, it was that DOC SAVAGE and let's-go-to-the-movies syndrome. It was done by George and I more as a labor

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"I was busy dis-inventing work."

of love. There was no deadline involved, so I don't know how may years we took putting the thing together. SWORDSMEN AND SAURIANS was also kicking around for a while. This time was my own fault. It was an ego trip. We felt that we had to get nothing but great stuff in it, so I started to put it together myself. Too much work and it got out of hand. It took me too long to realize I needed help with it. The physical and mental work was too much. I couldn't figure out a way to sandwich all the pieces I wanted in. After digging through every bloody thing I had, I wound up with a pile ten inches deep. The problem now was not to search for goodies, but what goodies to exclude. That was difficult, because the size or the subject wouldn't be right. I realized I was on a damn ego trip. Why does this have to be a perfect book? Who says every doodle has to be great? Then I decided to let George do it, and I'm quite happy. I hope he does a good job.

RICK: *What are you working on now?*

ROY: Staying alive and desperately collecting with no success.

RICK: *Let's talk about that for a little bit. You seem to live to collect. You're an appreciator.*

ROY: Yeah, a connoisseur, by nature.

RICK: *Were you like this as a kid?*

ROY: As long as I can remember, I've been a collector — of bottle caps, funny looking stones, matchbook covers. I got more discriminating as time went on. The art books started out as reference —

RICK: *And got out of hand.*

ROY: Rapidly. Then it got discriminatory from the other direction. That's the fatal point. It was no longer reference. A man bending over a Ferrari wasn't enough. It had to be a gorgeously-designed picture with the Ferrari just the right way.

RICK: *So, it became not so much reference, anymore, as much as appreciating the beauty of the product itself?*

ROY: Reference, I wouldn't go across the street for, anymore. I've been to eight or ten reference places and they always say the same thing, "Throw that man out." All they need to say is they never heard of what I'm asking for, but they always say, "Out, out."

RICK: *But back to the interview.*

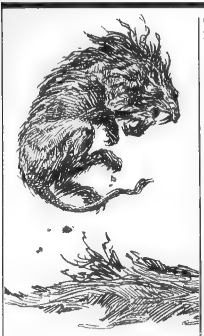
ROY: This is more important. You've been treated to a bit of Collector's Ranting.

RICK: *Do you have a library, or just a bunch of boxes?*

ROY: About 97% of the stuff is packed away. Someone has printed that I have all kinds of originals, and I don't — so don't bother breaking in. Luckily, I never got into collecting originals, I don't know why. I see that a new book has come out, I fall on the floor and foam at the mouth, one hand clutching the counter — I have to have it. A little kid points and asks his mother, "What's the matter with that man?" "He's a collector."

RICK: *Would you say your artwork was an extension of your collecting?*

"I learned more from Frank than anyone,



ROY: Right. Definitely. The biggest motivation has never been money. Like **Russell Flint.** He had these gorgeous figures, beautiful water colors. Why didn't he do something with them, instead of standing them around in these awkward positions? Why the hell didn't he animate them doing something? I knew I had to pick up this good thing from so-and-so and try to combine it with elements from so-and-so and do my own thing. It's a challenge to see if you can combine one guy's landscape, one guy's animation and someone else's lighting the way you know damn well it ought to be done. If you want something done to suit you, you almost have to do it yourself. That's the motivation. I have to work out the way *I* see a particular bit of mythology or ancient history.

RICK: *I like your grand view of ancient history.*

ROY: It's not accurate.

RICK: *It may not be accurate, but it was the vision — the panorama —that captivated me, whenever I saw an illustration of yours.*

ROY: Thank you. I have great difficulty in learning anything like anatomy, lighting — that baffles me to this day — or the business of handling an instrument and mastering a particular medium. If it ever rubs off on me, it takes a long time and stops well short of anything being good. What does rub off is a general gestalt of the whole thing. I can literally instantly see the connection between the possibilities — I've got the kind of mind that sees the relationship between things. The feel for Rome, the feel for Greece — a hubbub

and bustle about Rome. Greece strikes me as more leisurely. That's my interpretation and I wouldn't want to defend it, it's how I feel. In Greece I think of leader, philosophy. In Rome, I think of pomp and arrogance. It all goes into the people, the setting, the viewpoint.

RICK: *Like that phrase that sums up the two: "The glory that was Greece, the grandeur that was Rome."*

ROY: Take the Mayans and the Aztecs — they resembled a pathetic culture. You could feel they were doomed. I have a picture, which I hope gets into the Scithers book, called "Montezuma." It's a nice, loose, wild drawing that could do no wrong. It captures Montezuma as I see him. There he is crying and kneeling against the fragment of a monument. There's something of lost kingdoms and vanished empires, and the man himself, caught in this. That's the kind of thing you want to do but you can't just sit down and say you're going to shoot for — it just fell into place.

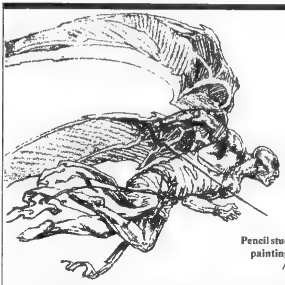
RICK: *How do you start an illustration?*

ROY: I used to work out a general pattern of dark and light. Then I'd work that up into something more identifiable in terms of action and figure. Then I'd endlessly look for reference on lighting on this or that.

RICK: *Where would you look?*

ROY: Everywhere, but mostly through my own stuff — which, of course, had everything except what I wanted. This began to get on my nerves, because I had consciously begun to reject the concept of

though neither of us was looking to learn."



Pencil study of Weiroo for cover painting, OUT OF TIME'S ABYSS, Ace edition.

work. I was busy dis-inventing work Then **Frazetta** and I would talk about work and I'd say I was never able to do this or that, and he'd look at me with his baby-blue eyes and say, "You're an artist, aren't you?" The more I got to doing things directly — it was a symbiotic relationship between **Frazetta** and me.

RICK: *He got a lot from you. He was more of an intuitive artist and you were more eclectic.*

ROY: He'd see something once and that was it. He'd know the difference between a Roman helmet and a Viking helmet.

RICK: *But he couldn't reproduce it with accuracy out of his head. He got the essence across.*

ROY: You get more and more fussy with everyone's work, including your own. By this time, you've seen so much good stuff that you realize this is a ten for effect, but it could be better. It got to the point where it got psychotic. The main fault about taking on a commercial job is trying to do someone else's dreams. And in addition to everything else, there are eighteen guys out there, and at least three women, who could do it better and enjoy doing it. I never was interested in making them happy.

RICK: *I think it's possible for you to do what makes you happy and still please an awful lot of people.*

ROY: That was finally rubbed under my nose by other people. They finally made me believe. So you don't make big money. The technical aspect of illustration has gotten very high.

RICK: *I don't know how much higher it can go. The imaginative quality is being missed by people. For every Rowena who has this tremendous facility, there's not the sense of wonder that you have.*

ROY: That finally dawned on me. It's not just a notion that I'd like to cherish, but an actual fact. They don't have the kind of mind and background of accumulated junk. I think I learned more from Frank than anyone I worked with, although neither one of us was looking to learn anything. We just had these damn, rambling conversations, like we're having now. Mostly, sitting around drinking coffee and eating pepperoni.

RICK: *Was this on Coney Island?*

ROY: At home in Long Island. We'd sit up literally all night drinking coffee.

RICK: *The good old days.*

ROY: They were good. He wasn't really a verbal guy, but you could get him going. Frank's very intelligent. He's one of these intelligent push-button-type people. If he had a deadline Monday, I'd drop over in the afternoon and he'd grab a brush and in no time, things were cooking. You could watch the impetus grow. I'm sure he never gave thought to the problem until he picked up the brush.

RICK: *He has, on occasion, used photo references — but he can also do a straight painting with no reference.*

ROY: I saw him do the one of Conan swinging the axe with a snake-like dragon

"Out there is what they call (shudder)

at the bottom. It's only very recently, the last three or four things I've done, where I felt that I was really painting. He makes it look so easy, like all good painters. He said not too far back that he had weeks where he couldn't draw anything. The old gag about Frank is — anything you can do, he can do better. And it's probably true. He's even been known to pick a car up — the old cars, when they were made out of metal. It'd be stuck and no one could do anything about it and he'd go over and say, "For Christ's sake," and heave the car out. He's a strong working guy — much, much, much stronger than he looks.

RICK: *Would you say you had an influence on him and the subject matter he got into after meeting you?*

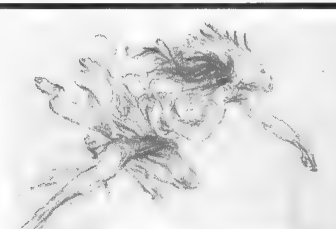
ROY: Probably indirectly.

RICK: *Do you watch TV or listen to the radio while you work?*

ROY: I used to watch inveterately, but not at all now. I didn't watch to learn anything.

RICK: *Just as background noise?*

ROY: Yeah. I think I stopped because I needed the concentration. Frank works with music going. The ability to concentrate has always been a bugaboo for me. Some people show evidence of having concentration. I don't frankly know how. TV is more distracting and less inspiring. It's to keep you from going mad from solitude.



Pencil study for Otis Adelbert Kline's PORT OF PERIL.

RICK: *Have you ever been involved with animation?*

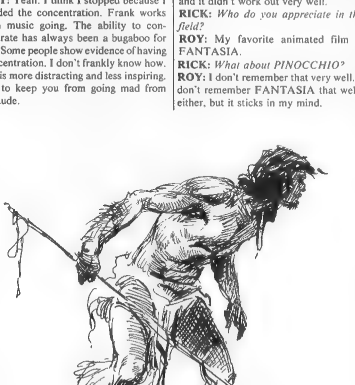
ROY: No. I tried my hand in it to learn, and it didn't work out very well.

RICK: *Who do you appreciate in the field?*

ROY: My favorite animated film is FANTASIA.

RICK: *What about PINOCCHIO?*

ROY: I don't remember that very well. I don't remember FANTASIA that well, either, but it sticks in my mind.



RICK: *Do you watch Saturday morning cartoons?*

ROY: The ROADRUNNER throws me on the floor everytime. I love it. It's so bloody funny. You're never suprised and yet you always crack up.

RICK: *Favorite artists? Frazetta?*

ROY: Oh, yes. **Norman Lindsey,** and it wouldn't hurt to mention **Munos Degrain.** I just sprang nine bucks down at the Strand Bookstore for a copy of a foreign language book of paintings, all seascapes. There's this incredible piece on the Colossus of Rhodes. This guy does what I would do if I was that good. Nobody had ever heard of him, including me. The Academie of San Carlos in Valencia has a whole room on him.

RICK: *How about writers?*

ROY: H.P. Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith, Talbot Mundy, not necessarily in that order.

RICK: *Were you ever a fan of comic books?*

ROY: Not really. **De la Fuente.** There's a guy you could write about him all day long and underrate him. The guy can do no wrong.

RICK: *What about American comics?*

ROY: I wouldn't want to stick my neck out. I don't follow them. After the EC stuff died out, my interest waned. **De la Fuente,** as good as he is and I'm not just speaking of the technique, could never have the kind of mind for the **Paul Gulacy** stuff. And vice versa. You can't collect everything. After a while, it gets out of hand.

RICK: *The past illustrators looked back to painting.*

ROY: Also there were more trees around

reality. Awful stuff. It wears you down."

in those days. The only way to get oxygen today is to find a thriving plant, if you can. These here in the apartment died, by the way — put your nose close and breathe in.

RICK: *You're suggesting that any aspiring artist have an oxygen tank next to his drawing table?*

ROY: Exactly. I've always wanted to try to live in an oxygen tent for a while. It stimulates the mind.

RICK: *So does ionization of the air. Any advice to people who want to become artists?*

ROY: My answer as an intelligent man is: Get a job as a TV repair man, or visit the Brooklyn Bridge and leap off. Alas, to be even more serious, anybody who's even vaguely into the game already knows you don't really have a choice.

RICK: *You do it despite the consequences.*

ROY: You gravitate into it with no effort. The effort is to get *good* at it. **Oscar Wilde** said, "The best thing to do with good advice is give it away."

RICK: *How do you perceive yourself, the world and your work?*

ROY: Dubiously. The world's chance of survival for another decade is not good. Twenty years is almost inconceivable.

RICK: *You always struck me as a person who would never bother thinking about such things.*

ROY: I don't worry about them.

RICK: *Even think about them. You come across as being in this fantasy world while the real world passes you by.*

ROY: I make some effort to avoid contact with reality, put it that way. Out there is what they call (shudder) reality. Awful stuff. It's the spiritual and psychological muck that wears you down.

RICK: *There's one thing I like about you — it seems you've enjoyed your life and had no regrets.*

ROY: If I had another go at it, I'd work harder. It would be basically the same kind of life, but with some direction to it. I now feel this compulsive need to get in there and do something worth a damn. Jesus Christ, I know so much. I have a rather peculiar viewpoint of a compilation of a couple dozen guys I admire and a couple of philosophies, which are not necessarily mutually compatible, and a lot of scientific knowledge — which isn't really scientific, just gestalt. I've reached the point where, with some effort and intelligence, I could pull off some good stuff

Illustration by Roy G. Krenkel for Robert E. Howard's THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER.

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"Often, artists don't consider color."

ANDY YANCHUS

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Andy Yanchus (Yen' chus)
Born: 31 May 1944, Brooklyn, New York.
Occupation: Contracted colorist.
Favorite Character: Blackhawk.
Favorite Color: Blue.
Worst Color: As far as comic reproduction is concerned, green.

Back when I was editing AVENGERS, CAPTAIN AMERICA, THOR, IRON MAN and a great many other titles for Marvel, Andy Yanchus was also on staff, as head of the coloring department. He impressed me as someone always hard at work — he never seemed to leave his desk — and always sincerely concerned with the finest details of each coloring job.

Since then, Andy's left staff to become a fulltime colorist. I was able to coax him away from his Dr. Martin's dyes just long enough to share some of his technical expertise on coloring for the comics . . .

JIM SALICRUP: *What exactly did you do on staff at Marvel?*

ANDY YANCHUS: It varied from the time I went on staff to the time I left. When I was hired, I was suposed to be the head of the coloring department. That department consisted of me and **George Roussos** — George, of course, handling all the covers. I was overseeing everything else that had to do with the color comics. I would reference out the books. I would locate the colorists. Just about everything that was involved in the process. When anything came back, it came to me. I signed the vouchers. I did the first run-through on the book, checking for accuracy.

JIM: *What constitutes a good coloring job? What do you look for?*

ANDY: Accuracy of the colors in costumes, hair color, continuity from issue to issue. And that which Marvel always looked for in coloring: Contrast. What was important was seeing the character against the background. I had to be aware if something was going to print well, or if it wasn't going to print well. If it was going to turn to mud, or if it had the potential to turn into mud due to bad printing, then I'd fix it.

JIM: *Give me an example . . .*

ANDY: If someone has a brown character standing against a gray background that would be a potential problem. Or having two shades of purple right next to each other! That kind of stuff had to go!

JIM: *Were you involved when Marvel started going full color?*

ANDY: I was never involved in the full-color stuff like EPIC, that was starting while I was still in control. No, that was always sort of special. The editors took charge of that domain. That is basically what happened to me, why I finally went off staff. **Jim Shooter** wanted the editors to have a handle on every aspect of the book. So eventually I stopped assigning the work and it got to the point where the editors were doing everything and were just giving me the books for referencing and corrections.

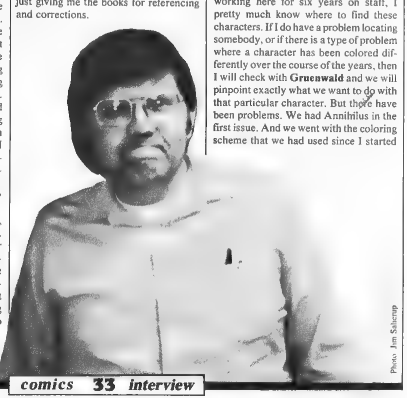

Photo: Jim Salicrup

JIM: *What do you do now?*

ANDY: I work at home, coloring comics. Instead of fixing other people's mistakes, I make my own.

JIM: *Which titles are you working on?*

ANDY: I have a handful of regular titles: THE MARVEL UNIVERSE, which will be over pretty soon, CRYSTAR and DAZZLER and others.

JIM: *How do you work on MARVEL UNIVERSE? Do you work closely with Mark Gruenwald?*

ANDY: Mark trusts me to know all the characters, even though they do have someone who replaced me on staff to do referencing. When it comes to something as involved as UNIVERSE, I usually do the referencing myself. Since I've been working here for six years on staff, I pretty much know where to find these characters. If I do have a problem locating somebody, or if there is a type of problem where a character has been colored differently over the course of the years, then I will check with **Gruenwald** and we will pinpoint exactly what we want to do with that particular character. But there have been problems. We had Annihilus in the first issue. And we went with the coloring scheme that we had used since I started

"Color overlays are . . . nightmares."

here. Right after that was published, **John Byrne** used him in the FANTASTIC FOUR. He went back to the original color scheme, which is somewhat different. So we're following the original color scheme now — which is in conflict with what is in UNIVERSE.

JIM: *Do they keep you busy coloring?*

ANDY: I have a contract with Marvel and I am obliged to do a certain amount of coloring every month. That works out to roughly six books a month. That is quite a lot. I have never had an opportunity to do any of the full-color books.

JIM: *Would you want to?*

ANDY: I'd like to try. I am certain I am capable of doing something of that magnitude, but no one has given me the opportunity yet to find out. If I tried that, of course, I'd have to have a lead time sufficient to familiarize myself with the process, as well as a story short enough so that it wouldn't eat up a lot of time. I expect something like that will come along eventually.

JIM: *You have worked with all of the Marvel colorists. Do colorists have styles of their own?*

ANDY: Oh, yes. Absolutely! I could probably pick up anyone's coloring style, after reading a few pages of a comic, and tell you who did it.

JIM: *How would you describe your own style?*

ANDY: I have been criticized as being too flamboyant — especially in using too many of the primary colors, lots of strong brilliant stuff. But I think after working closely with everybody's coloring for six years and seeing everything — how it prints eventually — I think that type of coloring is necessary for the regular books. You really have to allow for any type of potential printing or separating error that can happen. You have to go for the maximum contrast. Subtle coloring and shading might look great on the original — but if it doesn't print, then it is not worth a damn.

JIM: *Who is your favorite colorist?*

ANDY: My favorites are **Marie Severin** and **Glynis Wein. Petra Goldberg** is pretty good, too.

JIM: *How would you describe their style?*

ANDY: Glynis, I think, goes for a lot of the moody stuff. She uses subtler colors than a lot of people. She is particularly good for night shots, dark rooms and things like that. She has a unique style for incorporating rarely-used shades. **Marie** tends to be a little more flamboyant with her stuff. She'll scrap realism and go for effects.

JIM: *How involved are you with the choice of color overlays?*

ANDY: Color overlays are, most of the time, nightmares! A lot of artists like to use them, but don't fully understand what is possible and what is not possible, or how to set-up the overlays from the mechanical point.

JIM: *Let's start from the beginning — explain how it should be done.*

ANDY: A color overlay or a surprint, as the separators call it, is used when the artist does something in black ink that is later *printed* in color — as opposed to a black outline that is later *filled-in* with color. The solid black line or solid black area that is to be printed in color is done on an overlay. You put either vellum or clear acetate on top of the actual artwork. So the artist is establishing what he wants from the standpoint of separate color. Sometimes, artists will indicate whether they want it red, green, blue or whatever — sometimes they will leave that to the discretion of the colorist.

JIM: *When do you think color overlays are particularly effective?*

ANDY: They are good for astral images and ghost forms and things that aren't really there.

JIM: *Do you think they've been misused?*

ANDY: Overused. I think that is part of the problem. People do it just to do it, to have the special effect. Not for any good reason. There are times when it works fine. There are times when it wouldn't be any other way to do it. There have been too many cases, though, where it has just gotten out of hand.

JIM: *You once worked for Aurora. How did that come about?*

ANDY: Besides comic books, modeling has been one of my two main hobbies — between the two of them, model-building would win out. Ever since I could hold two pieces of plastic together, I was doing that kind of stuff. When I left college and had to start looking for work, I was lucky enough to get a job at Aurora the first time I tried.

JIM: *What did you do there?*

ANDY: I was with Aurora for nine years. I started off in research and development. I started redrawing model motoring track plans and proof-reading instruction sheets, and it was only a matter of weeks before I was carving plans for model-car bodies. Through the years, I worked myself up and eventually got to the point where I was project manager and was overseeing the entire development of a new kit from suggesting the idea and working with artists, sculptors, pattern-makers, engineers, tool makers, box people, even instruction sheets and everything up to and including approving the start of production on an item.

JIM: *Isn't Dave Cockrum also involved with model building?*

ANDY: That is one of the reasons he is late on some of his art assignments. He is building models when he should be drawing comics — but, yes, we got Dave involved in a lot of stuff at Aurora. He designed a lot of the dinosaurs and the movie-monster kits — some of which were produced. Unfortunately, a lot of designs were done at the end of Aurora's life as a kit producer, so a lot of his stuff was never manufactured.

JIM: *Let's get back to coloring. Is there any particular type of artwork that lends itself to good coloring?*

ANDY: Certainly. Every artist has his own style, every colorist has his own style, and you could get different combinations. As far as I am concerned, the art of **Kirby** and **Ditko** colors very well.

JIM: *What makes artwork difficult to color?*

ANDY: Often, artists don't consider color. They will group characters that wear the same-color costumes. This was always a problem with covers. I did a lot of covers on staff. The problem always came up with the group books, such as AVENGERS or DEFENDERS. All the blue characters would be standing off to one side of the page, all the green characters would be on the other, and all the yellow would be standing in the middle. That is always a problem. A good color sense is absolutely necessary.

Beyond a good color sense, you have to understand the comic-book process. We've had fantastic artists come in here and completely blow coloring the comic-book page, because they don't know our limitations — what's possible and what is not possible. We work with a range of sixty-four colors and while that might sound like a lot, it is really limiting, because many of those shades are so close or else tend to be very light or very muddy. I don't know if there is any way that someone at home could completely figure this out for themselves — you have to be accually working with people in the industry. And you must make a lot of mistakes before you learn what it takes to be a good colorist.

JIM: *What advice would you give to someone who wanted to become a colorist in comics?*

ANDY: I guess one piece of advice would be to make friends with the editors. (Laughter.)

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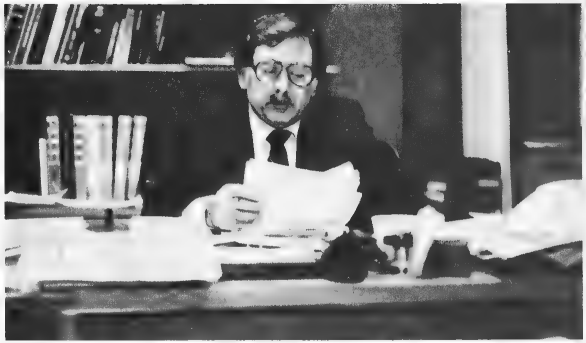
"I'm having so much fun . . ."

DICK GIORDANO



Photos: Jim Salicrup

Dick Giordano has been a comics professional for the better part of three decades, starting out at Jerry Iger's Studio before serving a long tenure at Charlton during the Fifties and Sixties. There he finally became the editor of the Charlton Action-Hero line — CAPTAIN ATOM, BLUE BEETLE, THUNDERBOLT and others — producing some of the better second-string super-hero fare of that time, besides being the artist on the detective strip, SARGE STEEL. By 1968, Dick found himself (along with many other Charlton staffers) at DC, where he edited such fan-favorites as STRANGE ADVENTURES featuring Deadman, AQUAMAN, THE CREEPER, TEEN TITANS and THE HAWK AND THE DOVE. He also inked many of Neal Adams' classic Batman stories in DETECTIVE, BATMAN and BRAVE AND BOLD and partnered with Neal in Continuity Associates for several years. Then, after Paul Levitz relinquished the editorship of the Batman family of titles, Giordano went from drawing board to editor's desk again. Recently, Dick was promoted to Vice President and Executive Editor of DC Comics. As an innovative editor and an inker of note — and occasional penciler of such books as SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN and RED SONJA — Giordano commands the respect of virtually everyone in the comics industry.

Klaus Janson, another artist of note, known most recently for his work on Marvel's DAREDEVIL, first interviewed Dick Giordano some fifteen years ago. He even managed to talk Dick into doing a cover for his fanzine. Later, he apprenticed as Giordano's assistant, doing background inking. Now, for COMICS INTERVIEW, Klaus and Marvel editor Jim Salicrup have teamed for an exclusive interview, to be published in two parts. The first, which follows, deals with Dick Giordano, the editor. . .

KLAUS JANSON: *You know it was fifteen years ago, the last time we did this?*

DICK GIORDANO: You're not going to get a cover from me this time!

KLAUS: *Exactly what are you doing at DC now as managing editor?*

DICK: First of all, I try hard *not* to do things. My official title now is Vice President-Executive Editor, not Managing Editor. I make that point because I am probably going to hire a managing editor. In every other business, managing editor is an administrative job. Only in the comics business has it become known as the creative genius behind the line.

KLAUS: *Tell me, how did the Vice Presidency come about?*

DICK: If you pay off enough people in high places. . .

KLAUS: *I suspected that!*

DICK: I think what it came down to was that, as a result of the structure of the company, I reported to **Joe Orlando**,

"I am responsible for the editorial

who reported to **Jenette Kahn.** As time went by, as an expediency, I started to report directly to Jenette, anyway. In a corporate structure, it has to be a Vice-President who reports to a President. And since I was by-passing two Vice-Presidents, Joe and **Paul Levitz,** by reporting to Jenette, it was just a question of making it official. It was reasonably certain in the six months before it happened that it would have to happen. A couple of things that were generally available to V-Ps, I had anyway. So getting the title was only a matter of actually *getting* the title. It didn't change my duties whatsoever. I am responsible for all the editorial content of the comic-book magazines that are published by DC. That takes in a lot of area.

Today I am involved in things like contract negotiation, which you wouldn't expect an editor to be involved in. Not only are we in comics strangers to negotiating for properties, but most of the people we are dealing with are equally unprepared for that negotiation. We both come to the table as neophytes. The freelancers must think, "Since I'm negotiating, I have to ask for something and I don't know what to ask for, so I'll make something up." I'm not sure that's exactly what happens, but it's got to be close to it. So we get involved in lengthier negotiations than we need to, because neither we nor the creative people have a clear idea of what we should be negotiating for.

KLAUS: *Do you think of that as part of your job as a creative personality?*

DICK: No, I don't think that should be part of my job as a creative personality, even though I function fairly well in that area. I don't think I am used to my best advantage. And that's why I mentioned a moment ago that we are in the process of hiring a managing editor, someone who will do things like scheduling and contract negotiations, which will leave me to do creative things . . . I can read comic books!

KLAUS: *Do you actually read all of the material that comes out of DC, before it leaves the house?*

DICK: No. That's a very important point. It can't be done at this point. It could be done if they relieve me of some of those other duties. Negotiations like those with Charlton Comics to buy the rights to a number of characters that were created when I was back there in the mid-'60s and those with **Marv Wolfman** and **Keith Pollard** over a property called VIGILANTE, have taken up a lot of my time. But when you're involved with major negotiations like that and are also dealing with a number of other problems — a freelancer who wants a raise, or whose contract is up, or who wants to get a four-thousand-dollar loan — it's really impossible to read a book-and-a-half a day, because that's what we publish. That's exclusive of mini-series, maxi-series, annuals and one-shots. When things go well, I get to read the make-readies of the regular comics. I read everything that is new, before it goes out of here. With one exception, which should be obvious if you read it — OMEGA MEN. I knew what the characters were, theoretically, and some of the controversy that revolves around OMEGA MEN is due to the fact that there was no real oversight. I don't mean that I would have made any major changes, but maybe I could have circumvented some of the criticism that the book has received.

KLAUS: *Do you think that the violence in the book will be toned down in the future?*

DICK: Oh, certainly. It is just a question of when. As both of you know, since you are involved in the business, when you see a printed copy of issue #1, issues two through four are already in various stages of production. It is hard to do any real changes there.

KLAUS: *Do you see yourself as setting policy?*

DICK: Oh, certainly. Definitely.

KLAUS: *For instance, a few weeks ago the whole DC crew was up in Connecticut. Were you establishing policy?*

DICK: Those retreats, as we've come to call them, were designed for people who make decisions to get to talk to one another without the constant interruptions of a normal business day.

JIM SALICRUP: *Does the entire editorial staff go?*

DICK: There was one that everyone went to — we just left behind four temporaries to answer the phones. People thought that we had dropped off the end of the earth. It's rather strange for an entire company to go away for three days. We were trying to determine long-term strategies, which includes strategies for our licensing business, marketing creations, and also promotions — everything that's related to the publishing of comics.

You see, we made a decision at that first retreat that we were going to be in a different kind of a business. Instead of printing what we liked and hoping somebody would read it, we would try to find out what the market wanted and try to produce it. This was only possible with the advent of the direct sales market. Now we have a handle on who the market is. With the newsstand operation, you didn't know who you were dealing with. But now we can go out and ask them. We send people out to the shops, we talk to our readers and we talk to the people who buy comics, and we know what they're buying and how many copies they're buying of Marvel and DC books. It's not a secret any longer. So now we found out what that market is interested in. This last meeting was an attempt to put together a two or three year schedule for the kinds of work we will do, and even some of the specific titles.

While we are there we also discuss the possibility of opening other market areas such as comics for girls. Women don't buy comic books. Why not? How can we produce something they will buy? Then there's comics for children. Harvey Comics is out of that area. Whitman is out of it. Archie is on the periphery, and if their heroes fail, Archie may go down the tubes. We have a whole marketplace out there that no one is attending to, so let's take a look at that.

Sometimes we discuss it and make decisions, sometimes we discuss it and decide not to get involved. We go up there with whatever research we can come by and discuss it at a department head level. We come back here with a clearer idea of what we should do the following year, the

content of the comics published by DC."

next year, the next three years, the next ten years.

JIM: *Has DC come up with any deals similar to Marvel's deal with the Epic books — where the creator actually owns the characters and is only selling certain rights?*

DICK: No. DC is a "rights" company. We feel that it is an advantage to both the freelancer and to ourselves to own the characters. We're serious about that and at this point I believe it is a good policy. We own the rights to the material. We're not trying to deprive the creative team of anything substantial — we are willing to share all the dollars that are generated by the property — but we feel that we are better suited to go out and strike a licensing deal or get a movie made or get a novelization. All of the things that you are presumably able to do if you did something for Epic and you owned the material.

JIM: *The only recent success that I can think of wasn't at Marvel or DC. It was the ELFQUEST property, which seems to be going into trade paperbacks. There's a movie deal going on and they own all rights to that and as a result, they are getting everything. What's DC's best deal right now?*

DICK: In terms of ownership of rights there are no deals. In terms of participation, everyone participates on some sort of level in the money generated by the property that DC owns. That means a percentage of licensing, the royalty plans, the reprint plans that we've got. We have just taken back our rights to foreign sales and there will be some money generated from that a year or two down the line. We don't know enough about that yet. This is the first time that we have been involved at this end of our business. We had an exclusive agent, whose need to report to us was minimal. Now we've managed to get that part of our business back.

JIM: *Is DC going to be handling merchandising for themselves now?*

DICK: More than ever before. In the past the Licensing Corporation of America was our agent and they handled everything that we did. But more recently, **Janette Kahn** sees herself as performing in that area and she's done extremely well so far, including one deal that I'm not at liberty to discuss at this moment. We see that there's going to be more pure money coming into the mix.

JIM: *Since you mentioned LCA, I'd like to have you talk a little bit about the Atari deal that came about with the ATARI FORCE comics.*

DICK: I was involved with that deal very personally and very actively for the last year and a half. We had set up an

According to Dick, DC will soon publish the new ATARI FORCE, written by Gerry Conway with pencils and inks by Jose Luis Garcia-Lopez.

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"I don't like words like 'Adults Only'."

arrangement with Atari to produce the inside-the-pack comic books. They would be a series of comics that would be packed inside with the cartridge that would somehow explain or delineate a little more about the game-play. ATARI FORCE was one of the groups that we created for that project, as was SWORD-QUEST. I spent a great deal of time on that project, although we didn't produce that many books — half a dozen ATARI FORCE books and four SWORDQUEST books when the final count is taken. In addition, we were going to work on some books for them to be sold at the point-of-sale for their cartridges. Atari was going to support that project financially. We were going to supply the creative input and they were going to supply the knowledge that we needed to get to their point of sale and a certain amount of money.

JIM: *Do you have any shares of Warner Communications?*

DICK: Oh, yes, I do.

KLAUS: *The in-pack project is no longer in existence, then?*

DICK: No, we'll finish up what we started, which will take us into three or four cartridges for '83 release, but after that it's cancelled.

JIM: *Do you see any projects for the future that you would be pushing in that direction or is it going to be more toward the direct sales market now?*

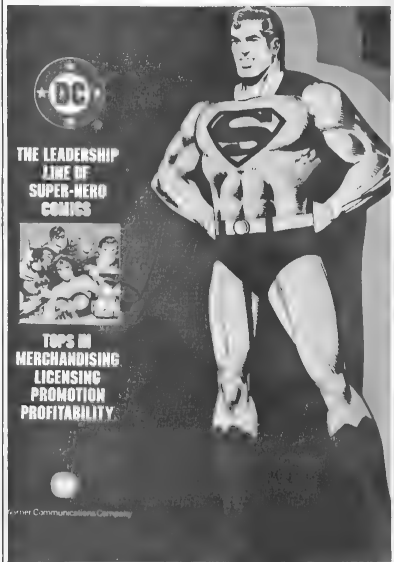
DICK: Well, actually, the material that was produced for the retail market is going into the direct sales market. The first two "graphic type" novels that were originally produced for Atari will be titled STAR RAIDERS and WARLORDS. They were to be attached to those two cartridges. We envision ourselves being involved in this area. However, our biggest job is putting comic books together for retail sales. The most important market for us is the direct sales market. Not only because that market is expanding but because of the future possibility of being able to eliminate some of the waste. With the newsstand set-up, about seven out of ten comic books produced got destroyed. With direct-market, you can produce one hundred knowing you can sell one hundred. This allows you to use the more expensive Baxter paper, and still make a fair profit. I can see a time five years down the line, when all comics will be printed on Mando or Baxter paper.

KLAUS: *Do you expect that to level off, or do you expect it to go higher?*

DICK: I expect it to go higher. The direct sales percentage has been going higher on a monthly basis since I've started at DC. Also our research indicates that as far as retail outlets are concerned, the direct sales marketplace is expandable by something like 400-500%. That means that we can get four to five times the amount of retail outlets there are now without hurting the business. There are that many areas of the country that are not covered by comic shops. Since there is one in your neighborhood, and one in my neighborhood, we don't realize that when you go out into the boondocks, there isn't one for thousands of miles. We may need more distributors to cover that much more area. The people who are willing to buy comic books at a comic-book shop would support four- or five-hundred percent more stores.

JIM: *As regards our talk about OMEGA MEN — what does DC plan to do, establish its own comics code?*

DICK: At this time, I have to speak for myself. Establishing editorial policy is my responsibility. I am going to rewrite the Code in such a way as to establish a policy that will meet our needs. I can't tell you all of the ins and outs yet, but the basic approach will be not so much a question of eliminating something as of avoiding something — unless there's a reason for doing it. That includes explicit sex, explicit violence, nudity and strong language. Almost any of the things that people complain about, I have no objections to their being used in the proper context. I have objections to them being used gratuitously in *any* context. But in terms of them being used in plot or character development, if sex or nudity or



Dick's artwork for a DC merchandising brochure.

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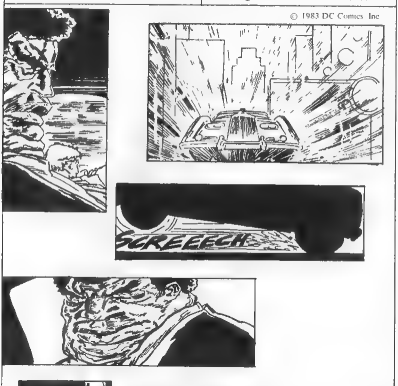
"If sex or nudity or violence is needed

violence or strong language is needed to tell the story properly, it shall be used. The storyline today in order to satisfy a reader of any age needs to deal with human issues, and since all of the things that I have just talked about have a relationship to human issues, we cannot ignore the fact that these things exist. Violence has always been part of the comics scene and there isn't any way a comic book can be produced without it. Now, we will have to decide where **Roy Rogers** violence will apply and where the real nitty-gritty violence, like blood coming down from a severed limb, is necessary. I really don't know if that's ever necessary in my own humble opinion. I am sort of turned off by violence in any case, and violence just for the effect of showing blood spurting is totally a turn-off for me. In one of his nightclub routines **Lenny Bruce** twenty years ago, said he wondered why it is illegal to show people making love, but it's not illegal to show them killing each other. That's really not a bad point. Our society believes that sex is worse than violence. Violence is fine. You can show that almost anywhere you want, but don't show two people in bed naked together, because that's bad.



A page from **THRILLER #1** by **Robert Fleming and Trevor von Eeden.**

JIM: *Do you think that DC will ever have an "adults only" line, or something on the cover restricting the sale of a comic?*

DICK: I don't know if we'll ever put that on the cover as a label, but I think that we'll indicate in some way on the cover that it's an adult comic book. I don't like words like "X-rated" or "R-rated" and I don't like "Adults Only," and I think that people should be allowed to make some decisions for themselves. I don't have objections to dealers making decisions as to what they'll carry. **Tony Isabella,** for example, called up and said that he'd like to put OMEGA MEN on his "Adults Only" shelf. That's fine, I have no problems with that. But I don't want to put "Adults Only" on the cover, because there are other dealers who will say, "Boy, the kids are going to love this!" I don't want to make a decision for our dealers or our readers. What I am going to do is to design three different kinds of covers for a line to incorporate three basic age groups with the top one being the adult age group.

Our survey indicates that our readership is age ten to twenty-four. I can't imagine producing one comic book that appeals to that entire spread. I have to try to break that down into smaller groups. There is a six to nine-year-old who, up until now, has been reading DONALD DUCK, but could be reading DC if we appealed to him. And I hope to do that. I'd like to have a kiddie line, an intermediate line — which is basically what DC has been all along — and an adult line.

JIM: *So you think DC will drop the Comics Code?*

DICK: No. I do think, however that the Comics Code may cease to exist because of lack of budget. Fewer publishers belong, fewer books are reviewed monthly and these factors determine the operating budget of the *CMAA*. As it is now, it is not a question of withdrawing from the Code to do things that we haven't done before. There was a time when I thought that the Code itself served no real purpose, but that the Comics Magazine Association did, so I was willing to accept the Code. The CMAA existed and served the industry, in some way. If the Code was restructured, we would have no objections to remaining in it, and we certainly will not be in the forefront in shooting it down. But DC will always have a code of good taste which will be based on the Comics Code. We're not trying to get away from good taste.

KLAUS: *Basically, what you're saying is that the Code is an anachronism, it*

to tell the story, it shall be used."

© 1983 Aardvark-Vanaheim

A painted page from the STAR RAIDERS graphic novel by Elliot S. Maggin & Jose Luis Garcia-Lopez

has not kept up with the times.

DICK: You said it better than I did. Actually, there are so few publishers now that we cannot support a functioning Code as we did before. It is not the Code's fault. It is not the Comics Magazine Association of America's fault. It's just that there simply isn't a way to make it work under the present circumstances.

KLAUS: *If we do away with the Code, is there some way to basically protect the companies from a 1950's-style Congressional investigation?*

DICK: I think that we should attempt that in some way. And I think that we should include some of the other companies. I think that it has been really short-sighted of us to ignore everyone but Marvel, Harvey, Archie and DC. The new companies are here to stay. And we should try to welcome them in, and try to talk to them just like Marvel and DC talk to each other. We don't always talk civilly, but at least we talk to each other! We don't talk to anybody at Pacific Comics, or Eclipse or First.

KLAUS: *Do you think that comics could*

"I don't have to do anything. And

become the brunt of a witch-hunt, as they were in the '50s?

DICK: There are watchdogs around the country that I am sure you are aware of — for example, ACT has had an impact on television. They feel that even shows like WILE E. COYOTE and ROADRUNNER are too violent for children. I can't agree, because I've enjoyed the shows so much as an adult, and I don't object to kids watching them. But ACT has an impact. If you're concerned about the almost meaningless crap that's on Saturday morning television, it's there because of the pressures that are put on the producers. I'm sure that most of these watchdogs have perfectly good motivations, but I suspect that some of them wish to move the responsibility from their own shoulders to somebody else's. What you do is attack whoever else is influencing the child besides yourself. I raised three children, who are all adults now. If there was something around that I didn't like, I took the step and said, "That's not for you." I didn't say to the person who produced that, "You can't do that to my child." I took an active interest in how my kids grew up. I think that if every parent did that, the censorship would be automatic, and it would be the most meaningful kind. They would all stop buying comic books and letting the kids watch WILE E. COYOTE and ROADRUNNER, and eventually the person who produced it would stop doing it, because you just couldn't sell it to anyone. That is the best kind of censorship: do not buy the book, turn off the set. Those are rights that you enjoy as a parent and you can satisfy the needs of your child that way.

KLAUS: *Is there any personal impact that you want to leave on DC? Do you see yourself as someone who is going to change the look of the books, or change their tone? I've always felt that one of your best qualities as an editor is that you let the creative people do what they felt was best. I am not sure how that compares to setting a policy or setting guidelines for the books.*

DICK: You are presuming that the two are incompatable, because one implies total freedom and the other implies a restrictive attitude. I think that's a false conception. You see, before the book goes into production, I've made some decisions about the worthiness of the book and the creative team. By the time a decision has been made to accept a book and its creators, we have already come to an agreement in a very quiet way. The agreement is, "Yeah, I like that." If I didn't like it to start with, it wouldn't be on

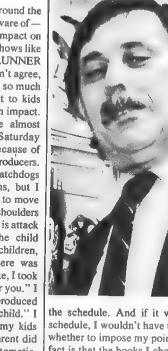


Photo: Jim Salicrup

the schedule. And if it weren't on the schedule, I wouldn't have to worry about whether to impose my point of view. The fact is that the books I choose reflect my point of view. And the people I choose to work on the books reflect my judgement.

JIM: *When you have a situation where you're talking to the writer and artist, almost watching their every move and advising them and, arguing, it is a lot tougher to come up with a good comic book.*

DICK: The creative process works best when the writer writes the story and the artist draws it. It sounds simple, but it's amazing how few people approach it that way. The editor's job is a very complex one. Part of it is father image, godfather, part of it is psychologist, psychiatrist, part of it is knowing when to stroke, when to pay, when to say, "No, no, you're going too far, come back a little bit." And how to say it. I would say it differently to you than I would say it to **Neal Adams**, because your personalities are different. If I were to delineate what I think my strength is, I think I'd tell you that. I think I work very hard to get into your viewpoint to judge what you're doing, rather than judging your ideas from my perspective, so that I know when you've gone beyond your capabilities, or that you're doing something that you're not going to feel too good about next week. I don't insist that you don't do it, I just suggest. Prod. Tickle.

KLAUS: *What you're saying is that you always know more than what you let on.*

DICK: Who said that? I wouldn't say that! (Laughter.) It is very difficult to talk about oneself objectively without sounding like an ass. As a matter of fact, I try not to think consciously about what I am doing because it impedes what I am doing. I try to do what I do naturally. I don't think, "Hmmm. How am I going to get him to do what I want?".

KLAUS: *Is it very instinctive for you to deal with people?*

DICK: I establish a relationship with people and that makes me influence them and them influence me in a very natural way. I approach **Len Wein** as **Len Wein**. I approach **Marv Wolfman** as **Marv Wolfman**, not as the writer of TEEN TITANS, but as a person who I know and know well. I am interested in people for themselves and I am interested in the things that they are interested in, to the degree that I can make them feel that they are contributing something. I found through the years that the best way to motivate somebody is to let him motivate himself. And I don't have to do anything. And they pay me money. (Laughter.)

KLAUS: *Are you finding that being editor — what has it been, two years now? — is meeting with your expectations, or are you disappointed? Do you have as much power as you thought you would?*

JIM: *Have you found "true happiness" at DC?*

DICK: I think that I am reasonably well-adjusted to the realities of the world. I think that I am happy in circumstances that other people would find chaotic. I have as much power as I thought I would have — which isn't enough!

KLAUS: *For what?*

DICK: Well, if I was negotiating, for instance, I could say, "Yes. Go ahead," instead of going to ask somebody else. Maybe the company is wise in *not* investing that much power in me. I'm not arguing the point that they're stupid and I'm smart. But I have as much power as I think that I need at the moment. Because to have more authority and more respectibility means to be involved in more things more often, and I really feel that there are not enough hours in the day to do the things that I am responsible for. I always leave something undone.

I get up about four in the morning. I work until about five in the afternoon. I put in a couple of hours coming home on the train reading scripts, occasionally reading the newspaper or taking a nap, and feeling guilty when I do that. I get home and I have dinner and collapse somewhere. I do this for five days a week, and on weekends I sit at a drawing board.

they pay me money. (Laughter.)"

If I want to have more power and more authority, I don't know when I would have time to exercise it. There just isn't any more that I can do than what I'm doing. But I am having a lot of fun.

I happen to be patient. I am not looking for the kind of changes you spoke about a little while ago to happen in a revolutionary manner. DC Comics will evolve into the kind of line I want over a period of five years. I'm not going to worry. I've got more time in than most other people in this business, given my age. But I believe that things that are done overnight are generally not well done. The change that we have to make at DC Comics is one that everyone will have a chance to contribute to. And it will take a little bit of time. We will make some solid progress an inch or two at a time. We made some solid progress in the sales. Now, I don't judge everything by sales. But sales are important to us right now, because they provide the income that we need to take the next step.

KLAUS: *I know that this is a heady question, but can you see yourself being editor here for the rest of your life?*

DICK: Yeah. On one very important assumption. I know that this will sound strange to a number of people out there, but assuming that the entire management team doesn't change, I can see myself doing it for the rest of my life. One of the things that is making this work for me is that I am getting credit for things that I shouldn't be getting credit for. I am not being unduly modest. But **Jenette Kahn, Paul Levitz** and **Joe Orlando** are an important part of the mix in my mind, because we do not substitute skills. Each one adds some special skill to the mix that makes all of this possible. Paul is in charge of operations. He watches the pocketbook. He makes sure us wild-eyed creative types don't spend more than we are making. He also provides some really good ideas. One Monday morning, he said, "Hey guys, let's triple our reprint rates!" That idea came from Paul. There are a lot of people who mightn't think so. And I am the one who is going to get credit for it. We had talked about it sort of off-handedly before, but the decision came from Paul; he did some homework, put numbers together and figured out that we could afford that. That is an important function. I couldn't do that. Equally, Jenette and Joe make some valid contributions to everything I do in some way or another.

KLAUS: *You are underlining the concept of teamwork here . . .*

DICK: But not a team that was contrived. We didn't say, "O.K. Let's get together and whip the world." I don't know how it happened — I just found myself in the group, and found that we got along well together. We meet at Jenette's house together, on a monthly basis —**Jenette, Joe Orlando, Paul Levitz,** me, and now **Neal Pozner** — and we will discuss things in a sane, rational manner. We then know where we're going to go for the next month or two or three or four. And we go off to our various duties with a feeling that, "Heh. This is O.K. They agree with me. They liked my idea." I don't always agree with everyone here and I'm sure that they don't always agree with me, but they all seem to be intent upon accomplishing the same things. There is no personality clash, or professional clash. As long as the four of us are working together as well as we are, and I'm having so much fun, I wouldn't think of doing anything else.

NEXT ISSUE: *Giordano — the artist — in which Dick holds forth on inking Neal Adams, on why he falls asleep in movies from overwork, on how to keep from becoming a has-been, on deathduels with engravers — and even on what DC Comics has planned for '83 - '84!*

VIGILANTE — forthcoming from DC — by Marv Wolfman & Keith Pollard.

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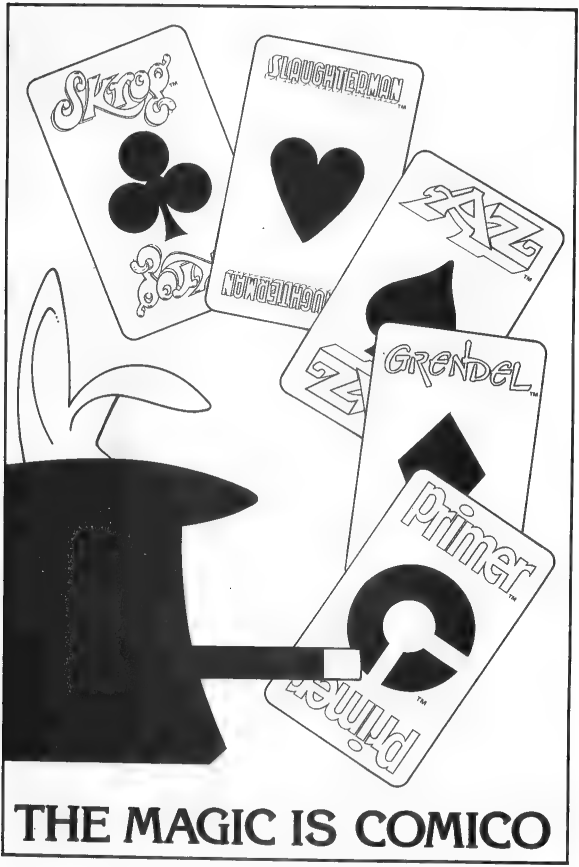

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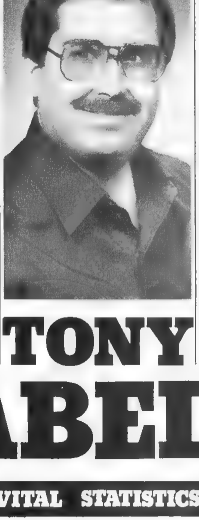
I first became aware of Tony Isabella in the late Sixties, as a result of his prolific writing for fanzines, and soon began corresponding with him. We finally met at Marvel, where I was a production assistant, when Tony came on staff as an editor. We got along well. He gave me a lot of opportunities — from editing to production — and we even worked on the Marvel Comics bicentennial calendar together.

In those days, it was not uncommon for us and guys such as Don McGregor, Ed Hannigan, Tom Orzechowski, Rich Buckler, Duffy Vohland and many more to work around the clock trying to meet some insane deadline. The couches of the Marvel reception room were often used as beds — it was quite a time.

Over the years since then, Tony left New York City to move back to Cleveland, but we have kept in touch. And, since the very start of COMICS INTERVIEW, Dave Kraft and I have intended to cover all aspects of the industry, including comic-book retailers and distributors. Tony is my first choice to debut this department. He's in a unique position in the comics field — he's a writer who has scripted for both Marvel and DC, as well as a retailer with his own shop and a sub-distributor, to boot! Tony's a busy guy, but he was willing to offer some fascinating insights . . .



TONY ISABELLA

JIM SALICRUP: *What's the origin of Cosmic Comics?*

TONY ISABELLA: Cosmic Comics was opened about 1976 by a man named **Mark Stueve.** Mark is the perennial aging hippie. He is a dead ringer for the 40 year old hippie that **Ted Richards** does. The store was fairly successful, too successful for Mark, who is sort of a laid-back character and was more interested in old hardcovers and old records. So, in 1978, I bought the store from him, and since then sales have continued to go up. We keep making more and more people happy. We have developed a real friendly rapport with most of our customers. Customers think of Cosmic Comics as more than just a place that they can go to buy their comics. I have been invited and gone to customers' weddings, bar mitzvahs, sent sympathy cards for funerals. They bring their newborn babies into the store to show me, and I bless them. I have dated customers. I have seen romance bloom among our customers. It is really much more than just a comic-book store. It is a proverbial way of life.

JIM: *But it's still a comic-book store.*

TONY: It still is a comic-book store. Secondarily, it is a full-service newsstand. We carry NEWSWEEK, TIME, computer magazine, science fiction paperbacks. Essentially, Cosmic Comics has been set up so that science fiction and

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Tony Isabella

Born: 22 December 1951 in Cleveland, Ohio.

Occupation: Writer, Retailer, Distributor.

Place of Business: COSMIC COMICS, 22 Colonial Arcade, Cleveland, Ohio 44115.

Credits: I've written BLACK LIGHTNING, DAREDEVIL, MOON KNIGHT, CAPTAIN AMERICA, GHOST RIDER, THE CHAMPIONS, IT—THE LIVING COLOSSUS (but I was on drugs at the time. Laughter.) I edited most of Marvel's black-and-white line when it first started. Most of Marvel's British line when they started it, and FOOM. And over at DC I edited the last couple of issues of YOUNG LOVE and PLOP.

Favorite Comic Story: SPIDER-MAN #32.

Best Selling Item Ever at Cosmic Comics: WOLVERINE #1. It sold over a thousand copies.

Worst Selling Item Ever: BLIP #1

Favorite Customers: Don and Maggie Thompson.

"The elderly gentleman wanted to know

fantasy fans can, at one stop, get just about everything they want. About the only thing we are not carrying is hardcovers. And that is mostly because of lack of space.

JIM: *What would you say to a prospective comic-book store owner who wants to go about setting up his own comic-book store? How would he do that?*

TONY: Well, the first thing that he should do is find a good distributor, preferably in his own area. The company I work with, Capital City, has been very successful because we have four different warehouses. Besides the one that I co-manage with **Dave Barrington**, here in Ohio, they have warehouses in San Francisco, Chicago and Madison, Wisconsin. To me, if you have a local distributor who's good, most of your problem is taken care of right there. The second thing you have to do is find a good location. A good location, to my mind, has a lot of the right kind of traffic — if you are near a high school, if you are near a college, if you are near a business area, you are going to have a lot of walk-by traffic. You might be able to get cheap rent out in the sticks, but by the same token if your customers have to drive there, they might not come as often, they may not come at all. It helps being near public transportation. Once you have a distributor and the location, then you have to start planning the image of your store and you have to publicize your store. It is important to find an image for your store and follow through on it.

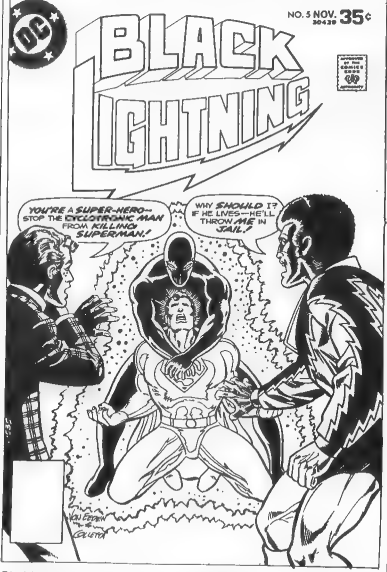
JIM: *Give me an example.*

TONY: Okay, I'll use the store I know the best, Cosmic Comics. I wanted the kind of atmosphere that I, as a longtime comic fan, would enjoy going to. We have a newsletter that we do to keep people informed on sales and upcoming comics. The handouts that DC and Marvel and all the companies give to retailers to inform them of their products, we hang those up. In the past, we have hung up drawings by our customers. Just essentially, our image is, there is nothing wrong with reading and enjoying comics even if you exist in an unenlightened society that doesn't realize how good these things can be, it doesn't matter. In Cosmic Comics we don't treat you as a junkie. We don't treat you as an unintelligent slug who looks at pictures because he can't read. Everybody who works for me reads comics. I read all the comics that come into my store, as painful as that might be at times. This is the image I wanted from the very beginning. I wanted a friendly store staffed with people who appreciate the artform and can talk to customers about it.

JIM: *That takes care of image and location and distribution. How much does it all cost?*

TONY: I would figure that you should have just about five to ten thousand dollars in seed money and that's low. It is possible to find distributors who will bill you for the books as they arrive. Those are the kind of distributors I recommend over the type who want you to prepay your order three months before you have received it. 'Cause that way your money isn't tied up. You should count on having a couple of months rent salted away. You should know that the furnishings are going to cost you money. Cosmic Comics recently had new racks put in, four or five new racks, and it cost over a thousand dollars. So I would say, five to ten thousand dollars as a minimum. That is not counting old comic book stock. It is not something you can do on a few dollars unless you are very lucky, unless you happen to hit the right everything, the right location and be in an area where there is no other comic-book store and the populus is just screaming out for a comic-book store. But like any other business you have to have a good financial base and you have to be prepared to work at it.

JIM: *Can you tell me what an average day is like for you?*


DC
NO. 5 NOV. 35¢
BLACK LIGHTNING
YOU'RE A SUPER-HERO— STOP THE CYCLOTRONIC MAN FROM KILLING SUPERMAN!
WHY SHOULD I? IF HE LIVES—HE'LL THROW ME IN JAIL!
NEAL ADAMS
DICK GIORDANO

Black Lightning, the character Tony created for DC Comics, is now a member of BATMAN & THE OUTSIDERS.

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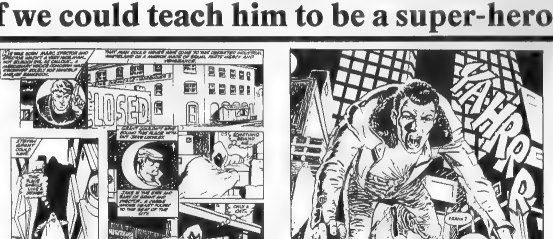
if we could teach him to be a super-hero."



A peak at MOON KNIGHT — scripted Tony Isabella-style, with art by Wade Hampton.

TONY: Well, today is not exactly an average day. Because I have actually three jobs, I don't have an average day. An average week might go something like this: On Sunday, I would be writing. I wrote a MOON KNIGHT story on Sunday and Monday night and mailed it off Tuesday. Got into Cosmic Comics about 4:00 Monday morning and started preparing for one of two shipments we get from the local magazine distributor. After I put out the order, I pay the bills that have come in the previous weekend, I do the bookkeeping for the previous week, I order the magazines that are going to come in Wednesday.

JIM: *How do you do that?*

TONY: The local distributor gives me a list of what is coming in, I tell him how many copies of which titles I want. I then collapse. When I wake up on Tuesday, I write the Cosmic Comics newsletter for that week and send it off to the printer. And again I handle any mail that might have come in and then I work on my distribution job for Capital City. I go over the previous week's invoices to see that they were added correctly and that everybody has received the books that they wanted and then on Wednesday, I start preparing the invoices for the next weekend. Wednesday evening we have a meeting at our Capital City warehouse, where we discuss the problems of the previous week and plan for the problems that we know are coming in this week.

JIM: *Like what?*

TONY: Problems like a book which is moving through the distribution channels a little bit too slowly. A good example is RONIN #1. DC's schedules have been very shaky lately, the books don't always ship on time and with a key book like RONIN #1, we want to make sure we get it as soon as anybody else in the country. In this case, we spent a couple of hours on the phone re-routing a truck so that it would drop off at the Capital City warehouse in Chicago instead of Wisconsin so that the truck coming from Wisconsin can come with our new books and pickup our RONIN in Chicago. In the middle of this we also had the 1983 COMIC BOOK PRICE GUIDE coming in on Piedmont and Delta Airlines, and to give you an example of how complicated that can be, I had to call the Delta-Cincinnati Terminal to find out where this freight was even though it would never, ever go to Cincinnati, because the Cleveland computer was down and the Atlanta computer didn't have a record of the freight. There was a record in Cincinnati but no record in Atlanta, where the shipment was shipping from. By about nine o'clock tonight, which is Thursday we finally had that problem straightened out. My invoices are now done or ready for the books that will be coming in Friday night. Tomorrow morning I will go set-up my store for the books that will be coming in tomorrow night. I then will come back to the warehouse and supervise the unloading of the shipment as it comes in and get the packers started packing up all the orders for the stores that we service and then about five or six o'clock Friday night I'll pick up the Cosmic Comics order, take it down to the store and set up our displays. Saturday, I'll go to the Cleveland Indians Opener. Even guys with three jobs get an occasional day off!

JIM: *I should hope so. How many people work at Cosmic Comics besides you?*

TONY: Okay. I have an assistant manager, **Mitch Wenzel,** a head cashier, **Angela Hudak,** part-time staff of three people, **Bob Corns, Donna Mumaw,** and **Carol Metoff** and from time to time I will call in another part-timer if we need some help. At Capital City, besides **Dave Barrington** and myself, who manage the warehouse, we have a fulltime warehouse manager, **Bill Glasgow,** and then we have anywhere from four to six part-timers depending on how heavy the shipment is that week.

JIM: *What is a day at the store like?*

TONY: A day at the store is usually a lot of fun. We usually have people amassing around our door before we open. Oohing and Ahing over our wonderful window display. We open the door at nine forty-five. We have a steady stream of customers until around twelve to about one-thirty, when we have our lunch hour rush which can get pretty hectic. And then we get

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ANDROMEDA PUBLISHING
GLENWOOD DISTRIBUTORS

COUNT ON US.

"I complained to DC about OMEGA MEN."

back to our steady stream of customers and that goes on until we close at 5:15. Most of our clientele, a good 90-95%, is over sixteen years old, so we don't rely on the weekends as much as those stores which attract mostly a younger clientele. Although our weekends are very busy and are our best days. We have the doctors and lawyers that **Stan Lee** always used to tell us read comics and whom even I, as a true believer who worked for Marvel for all those years, never really believed existed until I bought Cosmic Comics, but lo and behold, those doctors and lawyers do read comic books. In fact, the two lawyers that handle Cosmic Comics various legal needs are both customers and comic-book fans, I bought my insurance from a comic-book fan. They are really out there. That is exactly our clientele; the college-educated professional man and woman is really the hardcore clientele of Cosmic Comics.

I hope you're going to tell people, when you transcribe this, that I have been up since four o'clock this morning, so that they will understand that I don't always talk like this.

JIM: *You are talking real fine, Tony — but we will mention that. Dick Giordano told me that DC had done a survey that said that there is room for 400-500 more comic-book stores in America. What do you think about that?*

TONY: I can believe it. Even in this area there are several communities that do not have the comic-book stores that they should. Unfortunately, there is a tendency on the part of a lot of guys who want to open up comic-book stores to try to open near another comic-book store and I've never really thought that would work. The only times I've seen it work, were in those cases whensomeone is running a comic-book store and is just not a nice person. Does not give good service, does not give a good product line and treats his customers badly. My advice is just to look for places where there are no comic-book stores, areas with a good population, and with a good location and all the other factors I mentioned. But why go into competition with someone, when you don't have to. There are already over thirty comic-book stores in this area. And yet there is room for more, as DC's survey indicated. Because there are many fine communities around here that do not have a comic-book store. And I think that in later years I'll give up writing and distributing and retailing and go out like John Appleseed and spread comic-book stores all over this grand and glorious country of ours, or I'll try for **Hugh Hefner's** job, I'm not sure. I think I want to be a cowboy when I grow up.

Phil M. Noir, Tony's newest character. © 1983 Tony Isabella

JIM: *You mentioned that you had doctors and lawyers. Any odd fans amongst all your wonderful customers?*

TONY: (Laughter.) Yes, we do have a few. We've had the elderly gentleman who wanted to know if we could teach him how to be a super-hero.

JIM: *Well, did you teach him?*

TONY: The beginning lesson was flying, and damn, he didn't make it! He lived a full life I'm sure. Let's see. We have had death threats at the store, we have had comic-book fans who don't really have control over their emotions. We have our few eccentrics. Nothing that is really out of the ordinary for anybody who has ever lived in New York City.

JIM: *You once mentioned that your comic-book store once ended up handling an estate of comics. Tell me about that.*

TONY: From time to time, we get calls from attorneys who are handling estates and they find collections of comic books that are part of the estate and they don't know the first thing about them. So they usually call us up to appraise the collections for purposes of dispensing the collection, finding the worth of the collection and then helping them sell it so they can dispense the money to the heirs. In the past few years, I have been turning down those jobs just for lack of time. My current going rate for appraising a collection is $100.00 per hour. It was $75.00 per hour until somebody paid it, right now it is $100.00 per hour until somebody pays that. And then it will go up again, 'cause it

TONY ISABELLA

"The top Marvel is X-MEN. The

© 1983 MCG

Tony Isabella as caricatured by Marie Severin.

is not something I really enjoy doing. But it is important in that comic books found in an estate are not thrown away anymore, are not just considered trash, or just paper to be given to a scrap drive, it indicates that people are beginning to recognize the importance of comic books in American culture. We have also been called upon to appraise collections for insurance purposes and although it is still very difficult to find an enlightened insurance company who will insure a comic book collection, they are starting to do it.

JIM: *Is your collection insured?*

TONY: I don't have that big a collection myself. I have the various outstanding comics that I wrote, a few favorite comics and a rather extensive BATMAN collection and yes, as a matter of fact, it is insured. The business people are starting to accept the fact that comic books have value, which those of us who pay taxes on our inventories knew a long time ago.

JIM: *I wanted to find out how well the comic books themselves are selling at your store. Can you tell me in general how they are doing?*

TONY: In general, they are doing very well. Marvel is out-selling everybody. The top Marvel is X-MEN which in my store out-sells the top DC title which is TEEN TITANS by about — hold on for a minute while I turn on my calculator and figure this out — it out-sells the nearest competitor by about 40%. In all fairness to DC, Cleveland is very much a Marvel town.

JIM: *Let's get back to X-MEN briefly. Aren't you the one who rejected Chris Claremont way back when?*

TONY: No, as a matter of fact, I was one of the few people who gave Chris writing back then. I hired him as my assistant editor, when I was editing the black-and-white magazines for Marvel. It was **Terry Austin** — see, everybody has somebody that told them they would never make it in comics. I did give first jobs to people like **John Byrne, George Perez,** I gave early assignments to **Keith Pollard, Ed Hannigan, Bill Mantlo, Will Meugniot,** but one guy, I looked at his samples and I told Terry, I didn't think he had a future in comics. Terry was in Cleveland a few months back and he reminded me of that — he'll walk funny for a few more weeks but . . . The best thing to do when somebody tells you that you are not going to make it in comics — is to turn around and prove how dumb they were. But everybody is allowed one, and **Terry Austin** is my one.

JIM: *I guess what I was thinking of was Chris sent you a letter back then . . .*

TONY: Right, okay. You had it backwards. When I was in Cleveland working for the CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER, I submitted a Western script to Marvel. **Chris Claremont,** who was working as a summer intern that particular summer, sent me back a rejection letter. Now, it was a very nice rejection letter. The first day Chris worked for me as my assistant editor, I had that rejection letter on his desk waiting for him when he got in. So Chris rejected *me.* No hard feelings. I still hired him. And I've almost never regretted it.

JIM: *So what are the top-selling Marvel books?*

TONY: X-MEN, ALPHA - FLIGHT looks real strong, FANTASTIC FOUR is probably our second-best-selling book. IRON MAN is showing surprising strength. The current storyline seems to have really drawn the readers' interest. AVENGERS is picking-up again, AMAZING SPIDER-MAN and PETER PARKER are very strong. Just about every Marvel title that I can think of is showing some type of growth. DAREDEVIL is slipping a little bit because the fans were very taken with **Frank Miller** and we lost a few when Klaus took over the book, although I do believe that Klaus is doing excellent work. I suspect that the book will drop a little more under the new artist only because he is a newer talent, he is following such a tough act. The weaker Marvel books are pretty much the books that Marvel has cancelled already. And those few books that I feel are a little weak, I feel that Marvel is already taking some steps to fix them. I really don't have any complaints with any Marvel books. There are Marvel books, such as U.S.1, that we never expected very much from and we haven't been surprised — I enjoy that book myself, but I never thought that it would sell a lot of copies.

JIM: *Well, how does DC compare?*

TONY: DC has been a little weak in this area. I know that in my own store very few DCs are on the rise. TEEN TITANS is a good strong book, the LEGION is a good strong book, CAMELOT 3000 is a good strong book, the BATMAN books are showing a little bit of interest, but everything else is either the same or down.

JIM: *And THE OMEGA MEN?*

TONY: THE OMEGA MEN is dropping. As has been mentioned in a few fanzines, I have complained to DC about the excessive violence in THE OMEGA MEN, and I have heard that in other cities OMEGA MEN is starting to drop,

top DC title is TEEN TITANS."

and my own feeling is that THE OMEGA MEN will not be a long-term success. It may not be cancelled. I find it very hard to believe that somebody could produce a direct sales book and have it fail because the direct sales market is set-up so that you do make money. But I do not think that OMEGA MEN is going to be a big success for DC in the long run. We have had a backlash as to the violence. One young man makes a point to complain everytime that he comes into the store that we even carry the book, regardless of the fact that we will not sell it to anyone under the age of sixteen and that we have constantly asked that DC put a parental guidance statement or something on the book. So while to my mind it is not a failure saleswise, I find the book distasteful and would not cry if it disappeared tomorrow.

JIM: *How are the other new companies doing?*

TONY: First Comics is strong. All the new companies are doing at least okay. First is strong because they come out on time. There is some interest in Red Circle, but there are so many characters at Red Circle right now that the readers are just a little confused. Pacific has been strong with most of their books. Their anthology books are surprisingly strong. Eclipse is steady, with DNAGENTS showing signs of being a real block-buster hit for them. NEXUS is strong from Capital Comics.

JIM: *How are the Archie comics selling?*

TONY: We carry Archie and while a good Archie title sells about a tenth as well as a good super-hero title, we do make it a point to carry all of them. They do have their loyal clientele, and I do wish that more people would take a look at some of this non-superhero material. Archie Comics has a writer named **Frank Doyle** who I think is just as good a writer as any of the super-hero writers. He's working in a very difficult format. Working in a five-page-complete-in-itself-humor story format. Frank has shown himself to be a master of characterization, dialogue and situation. I kind of look at him as the **Neil Simon** of comic books.

JIM: *Well, you've got me interested. What about the Warren stuff that is not coming out anymore?*

TONY: Thank God! The Warren sales were, from the time that I got my store to the time that Warren went out of business, constantly on the down-swing. I think that they grossed-out their audience. This is one of the things that I see repeating itself in OMEGA MEN. The readers do not particularly want to see lots of blood and guts and foul language. I'm not accusing OMEGA MEN of foul language, but essentially the Warren books just got so gross in so many ways that people just turned them off. Also they were just not competitive price-wise. Near the end the Warren books were $2.50 for a badly produced black-and-white package and for $2.50 you can get EPIC or RONIN. Why should you buy CREEPY?

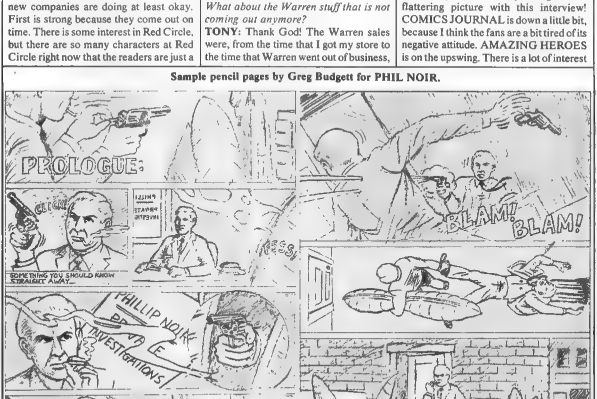
JIM: *How are ELFQUEST and CEREBUS doing?*

TONY: ELFQUEST sells as good as a middle-level superhero book, which is quite good. CEREBUS is a little bit weaker but still a good seller.

JIM: *And magazines about comics?*

TONY: Well, COMICS INTERVIEW does real good for us. I hope that gets me a flattering picture with this interview! COMICS JOURNAL is down a little bit, because I think the fans are a bit tired of its negative attitude. AMAZING HEROES is on the upswing. There is a lot of interest

Sample pencil pages by Greg Budgett for PHIL NOIR.



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Tony Isabella as caricatured by Marie Severin.

in the new BUYER'S GUIDE. COMICS SCENE is fairly healthy.

JIM: *How is the underground comics market?*

TONY: Undergrounds are down. The best-selling underground is I SAW IT by a Japanese artist whose name I can't possibly pronounce after midnight, but it is the autobiography that BAREFOOT GEN is based on. That has been our best-selling underground lately. Whenever there is a new FREAK BROTHERS BOOK, that does well. RIP-OFF does well. Cleveland's own AMERICAN SPLENDOR does well for us. Unfortunately there hasn't been a new issue for a very long time but CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE was always a very big seller for us. GAY COMICS and BIZARRE SEX do well for us. The long-running, well-produced undergrounds always do well for us. Most of the newer ones just kind of fall by the wayside.

JIM: *What are you writing these days?*

TONY: I am writing MOON KNIGHT #34 and #35. Issue # 34 is worthwhile, because it has a totally bizarre six page back-up strip that people will either love or hate, literally. There will be people for whom this will be their favorite story of the year, but there will be other people who say, "What is that jerk doing?" But it is different. I am doing these two books, but I don't know if I am going to be the regular writer on the book or not, but I think people will find in these two issues that there are some needed improvements being made to the character. Without violating what has gone before, because that is something that I will not do. MOON KNIGHT was created by **Doug Moench** and I will be faithful to his version, without trying to imitate his version. I have done a story for BIZARRE ADVENTURES. And I am currently working on seven new strips. The one that is furthest along is PHIL NOIR, HOLLYWOOD DETECTIVE.

JIM: *What's it about?*

TONY: Well, I can't really tell you what it is about, because you wouldn't believe it. I can tell you how the first story opens up: Phil is sitting in his office and across from him is a pod from INVASION OF THE BODY-SNATCHERS. The pod opens up and his duplicate comes out fully clothed, and armed. Phil shoots his duplicate, drags the body and the pod, outside to the alley behind his office where he heaps them onto a pile of other pods and duplicates. The first story finds him hired by **Marilyn Monroe** to find her murderer. And if that doesn't give you the idea that this thing is kind of weird . . . ! PHIL NOIR is going to be the kind of strip that people can't figure out right away. I know what is going on, why it is going on. There really is a logic to what is going on in this strip. I figured it will take about twenty-four stories before everything becomes clear — it will be a limited run thing. But since I do want to do it as a graphic novel and I don't want to do more than one in any two or more years, it'll take you about forty-eight years to learn everything.

JIM: *Has success spoiled Tony Isabella?*

TONY: Not really. I am doing work that I like. I am an upstanding member of my community. I do occasionally do civic service type stuff like speaking at schools, colleges and grade-schools on writing, on retailing, on distributing. I don't think that it has spoiled me and I don't think that it has necessarily even satisfied me. I am happy. I have no complaints about where I am right now. I enjoy what I do. I make a good living at it. And there are many opportunities for me to do other things in the future. I don't think that I am a success yet. My definition of success is when you are on the TONIGHT SHOW and you are not called out five minutes before the final curtain.

JIM: *What is in the future for Cosmic Comics?*

TONY: That depends largely on me finding some new people. We no longer take tables at conventions. We'd like to but it involves me finding people who can handle conventions for us. We don't have a mail-order service. But I have discovered that there is a crying need for a good mail-order service. Many of our customers who, for one reason or another, have moved out of the area, I am still sending them their books because they just cannot find a good store or good service elsewhere. So I am looking around for about two or three people right now, that I feel are competent enough to handle a mail-order business for Cosmic Comics, a convention business for Cosmic Comics and maybe other things. There is any number of things that Cosmic Comics can do. We are a corporation, and our corporate charter gives me incredible leeway as to what areas the corporation can move into. So essentially the future will be that it will keep getting bigger and bigger or that somebody will come up with a check with lots of zeroes in it and take the whole thing away from me. And then I will have to write more for a living.

JIM: *Is there anything you'd like to add?*

TONY: Yes! There has been a persistent rumor going around. Every few months somebody says, "Oh! I heard you were a minister. We heard you had a church somewhere." I have deeply-held religious beliefs, but I am not a minister.

JIM: *How do you think these rumors got started?*

TONY: I am not quite sure. Granted, the idea of making Cosmic Comics a church with tax-free status does appeal to me, but it is just one of the weird rumors that got started and every couple of months I hear it and it's not true. I have nothing against ministers. They are fine people. But I am not a minister.

COLLECTORS' MARKETPLACE

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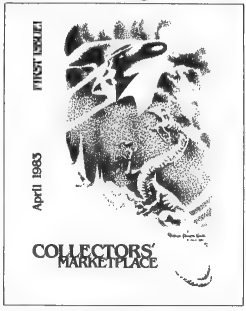

Advertising is the lifeblood of a business—you don't need to be told. You also don't need to be sold frills and professional services that you never asked for—expensive frills that make work for a plant full of professional talent, but don't necessarily make your advertising dollar any more effective. Going pro when semi-pro is good enough is like knocking down mosquitoes with a howitzer. Fandom got strong enough to become a national market and attract the attention of big-time publishers. But those publishers aren't fans, don't know what fans want or need, and certainly don't understand the ins and outs of dealers who want to appeal to them.

COLLECTORS' MARKETPLACE is a new venture fresh-sprung off of some established talent—people who have been active in fandom since its earliest years: HARLEY ANTON, comic dealer and president of one of the country's strongest and best-respected conventions, the Atlanta Fantasy Fair (now in its ninth year); KENNETH SMITH, SF illustrator (still active in HEAVY METAL, the new Bradbury DINOSAUR TALES, and other fantasy works) and widely admired producer of Phantasmagoria Magazine and Portfolios; and ANGELA SMITH, his wife, experienced in design, printing, and mail-out from her years with a commercial art agency. All three are widely known throughout fandom, and are herewith pooling their experience and talent to provide an interesting, colorful, and economical forum for your advertising matter. In our venture, Harley functions as Publisher and Managing Editor, Kenneth as Art and Design Director, and Angela as Production Head. (In fact, each of us will be doing whatever needs to be done and whenever it needs doing, in order to get our magazine out on time. Reliability is everything.)

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COLLECTORS' MARKETPLACE will be a monthly magazine, about 64 pages, on newsprint 8½x10¾". Editorial content—including select unpublished art from Kenneth's crowded files—should compose about ¼ of each issue. The first two issues will be given away free to 5000 people—a DIFFERENT 5000 for each issue. No one will receive both issues unless he subscribes. Number 3 will be given away free to yet a different 10,000 people at major conventions this summer, as well as mailed to all who subscribe to #1 and #2. Publication will be monthly—April 1, May 15 and June 15. Issue 4 will appear September 1, mailed only to paid subscribers. (Over $500 in prizes will be given away in a contest to attract subscribers.)

RATES: Ad rates for COLLECTORS' MARKETPLACE will be as follows: FULL PAGE AD, $60; HALF PAGE AD, $35; QUARTER PAGE AD, $19. As a bonus to advertisers, 3-issue ad subscriptions will be sold to issues 1, 2, and 3 (remember these issues will go out to 20,000 DIFFERENT people)—a full-page ad for these 3 consecutive issues will be $150, a half-page ad $90, and a quarter-page ad $50.

DEADLINES: Ad deadline for issue 1 is March 15, for issue 2 April 30, and for issue 3 May 31. Make checks payable to COLLECTORS' MARKETPLACE. For a 3-issue ad subscription, you must pay the full amount in advance but may submit 3 different ads if you wish. Advertisers may request tear-sheets of their ad, but complete copies of the magazine can be mailed only to subscribers. For further information, call Harley any night of the week between 7:00 and 10:00 CST at (504) 766-3582. The subscription rate will be $6.00 for 12 issues.

"I love Batman, because he's unique."

June Kostar was reading an issue of THE FANTASTIC FOUR that I had edited when I first met her in Washington Square Park — on the street, in fact. I recently spent an early-spring evening talking comics with this talented young woman in her apartment, not far from the New York Headquarters of the Hell's Angels . . .

Photos Jim Salicrup

JUNE KOSTAR

JIM SALICRUP: *When did you start reading comics?*

JUNE KOSTAR: My youngest childhood memories are of walking to Tony's, the corner drugstore, and pulling comics off the racks. Mostly BATMAN or JUSTICE LEAGUE. Forcing my friends to play super-heroes. Getting a great annual issue with a chart showing five hundred of them, their powers and secret identities. Everyone picked a character and all the neighborhood kids leaped around, each pretending to be one of them.

I've been reading comics so long that it's in my bloodstream. I read only DCs 'til I was twelve. Then came the turning point. I discovered a CONAN by **Barry Smith**, where he fought a dog and blood started coming out of his mouth and eyes, and I thought that was really weird, to show internal bleeding. After that, I found THE AVENGERS and completely turned around to Marvel. Except for BATMAN, whom I've never shaken.

JIM: *Who is your favorite character?*

JUNE: Batman. Most of my favorite characters I'm not actually buying or reading at the moment. They're characters that have been around so long, they're like real people. Leaving them behind is like leaving a friend.

I love Batman, because he's unique. He's not alien, no one gave him powers, he's just a guy who got outraged and had to hone himself — his intelligence, his gymnastic ability, his strength. A lot of his effectiveness is tenuous, the spooky part that shakes up criminals — that superstitious, cowardly lot. His power is human ability with a spiritual link and he has to keep cultivating both. It's nice.

JIM: *What did your friends and family think when you started reading comics, particularly super-hero comics?*

JUNE: They liked it, because I read a lot, which lead to other kinds of reading.

JIM: *People have an image of girls only reading Archie or romance comics.*

JUNE: Well, I played cowboys and raced soapbox cars on the backstreets, and the only dolls I touched were G.I. Joes, so it was in character for me.

JIM: *How have comics affected your life?*

JUNE: By my trying to live up to the heroes' standards in everyday life. Once, very early in the morning, I was walking past a fried-chicken stand on Houston Street and the door half-opened and a little white note flew out. I tried to ignore it, but I invented this fantasy that someone was taken hostage and his only chance to escape was to throw out this note, so a passer-by could save him. I knew it was stupid, but I thought, "Batman wouldn't pass up a chance like this!" So I went back and it was a matchbook from someone sweeping the floors.

JUNE AND JIM: (Laughter.)

JIM: *So comic books didn't corrupt you at all, eh?*

JUNE: Did they make me violent? I used to fight a lot. No, they improved my vocabulary and made me want to help little old ladies across the street.

JIM: *How did your job at the circus come about?*

JUNE: I wanted to work with super-heroes! As far as I can see, circus performers are as close as you can get. There are athletes, but they sweat too openly. In the circus, they smile and wear flashy costumes and perform feats with style.

One of the neatest ties between circus performers and super-heroes is the secret-identity thing. Before acts, performers in drab jumpsuits set up their equipment in the ring and no one recognizes them. The tent is small enough that everyone sees everything. Then they run backstage, tear off their outer clothes, run out as the curtain opens and the audience goes "Yaaay!" and claps. I saw the difference a costume makes. All those years, I

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: June Kostar
Occupation: Electrician and Roustabout
Born: 29 April 1960, Akron, Ohio
Favorite Restaurant: Veselka on Ninth Street and Second Avenue, in NYC
Name of Pet Cat: Captain Kitty O

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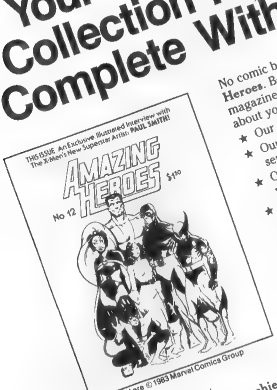

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"It's not advancement to show blood."

thought Superman's uncovered face being a secret identity was shaky, but now I can believe Clark Kent got away with it.

JIM: *What do you do at the circus?*

JUNE: I'm a roustabout and I'm also on the ring crew at the Big Apple Circus. Roustabouts pound stakes, haul cables, build bleachers, raise the tent and move the same pile of sand five times. The building of a circus is a haven for Murphy's Law. The ring crew works with the performers during the show, taking care of equipment, props, setting up rigging and sometimes cleaning up after the elephants.

JIM: *Did you ever think of becoming a performer?*

JUNE: Mister Dymek, a big Polish performer who used to be a gymnast, felt my arm — I lift weights — and said, "You strong woman, got nice smile, good body. You should be performer, yes?" I told one of the clowns I wanted to do card tricks. He thought it was funny, but clowns think everything is funny.

JIM: *How would you do that?*

JUNE: Actually, I don't know.

JIM: *Just use big cards?*

JUNE: I could do a reprise — a clown sketch to distract the audience from the change-overs. Or I could go amongst the audience before the show. The June of Hearts! I want a long white flowing cape, with cards sewn on the end that flutter, and rhinestones of the four card suits going up the sides. And then I'll be naked, underneath – to prove there's nothing up my sleeve.

JIM: *(Laughter.) Well, keep trying! Getting back to comic books, tell me – has reading them affected your art?*

JUNE: No matter what subject or medium I use, my work ends up looking like a comic book. It gets so you can see the world that way, in a black frame with a white border, and if something is real dramatic it gets to break a panel. You can see noises in red letters, like if someone slaps their knee a little "smack" sound effect appears briefly. And color! I like a completely gratuitous pink sky and a green building! And because of comics, my work is wordy. It's as much writing as pictures.

JIM: *Do you think comics are geared for a male audience?*

JUNE: Absolutely. It's definitely a man's world. It's just like pornography — women in comics are either exaggerated counter-stereotypes, like She-Hulk, or your standard Janet Pym, worring about her nails.

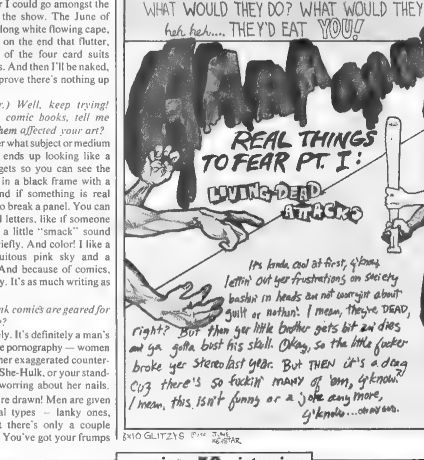
The way they're drawn! Men are given different physical types — lanky ones, husky ones, but there's only a couple types of women. You've got your frumps and elderlies group — then there're the sexpots, with ten foot legs, outsized breasts, two slits for a nose, long flowing hair. Never a flat or andro body. Or a nose. I'd like to see a woman with a schnozz. Someone with character is missing. It's as if all these artists with diverse styles leave a blank space whenever a women needs to be drawn — then this little ninety-year-old man hobbles from studio to studio, filling in his style women That's how much alike they look!

JIM: *What would you like to see in comics to get you excited again?*

JUNE: Comics shouldn't sit still or churn out the same old stuff. They need to keep that original innocence and wonder that gets kids reading them in the first place. It's not advancement to show lots of blood or shallow realism. A drug story! Teenage vandals on the loose! Superheroes are not realistic and putting outrageous characters in gritty environments is ridiculous! Either put realistic characters, even ones with no powers, in real situations — or, preferably, put way-out ones in surreal settings. A sense of humor would be a way to grow, be more intelligent and open-ended. Let them be as silly as they are and keep that playfulness alive! Comics have hit a point where things are stagnating. Readers and producers seem bored. The audience is more adult now and comics are trying to evolve into something more sophisticated, yet still working within a very structured framework. There're certain rules of behavior you follow, and certain symbols you must use, like word balloons. However, the more sophisticated they try to be, the more they get away from what a comic book is.

JIM: *Which is . ?*

JUNE: There's an innocence to them. I like that. I can roll one up and carry it in a crowded train. It's stapled so it doesn't fall apart in five hundred pieces like a newspaper and it's not clumsy like a book. They're nice graphics and great stories printed on newsprint and made to fit kids' hands. Precious and disposable at the same time.


WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF ALL THE DEAD ON EARTH WERE TO SUDDENLY COME TO LIFE? WHERE WOULD THEY GO? WHAT WOULD THEY DO? WHAT WOULD THEY EAT??
heh heh.... THEY'D EAT YOU!
REAL THINGS TO FEAR PT. I:
LIVING-DEAD ATTACKS
1
It's kinda cool at first, y'know, lettin' out yer frustrations on society bashin in heads an not worryin' about guilt or nothin'. I mean, they're DEAD, right? But then yer little brother gets bit an dies and ya gotta bust his skull. Okay, so the little fucker broke yer stereo last year. But THEN it's a drag cuz there's so fuckin' many of 'em, y'know? I mean, this isn't funny or a joke any more, y'know...oh my ears.
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LAST WORD

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MORE ADULTS

Dear Editor,

I loved your first issue of COMICS INTERVIEW. Usually I don't like interviews because they are too long, but yours are short and to the point.

I would like to comment on the interview with **Mike Teitelbaum.** I read and enjoyed tremendously most of Whitman's titles. I grew up with the Disney characters, Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers. At the present time, I am 20 years old and still enjoy Disney as much as I did when I was a kid. Many other age groups do too.

I like Whitmans very much, when I can get them. When they are being published, they are hard to find. My local store doesn't like carrying Whitman because of the bag system. I have a suggestion that might help me and others find our favorite titles.

Direct sales and comics shops are increasing in popularity. If Whitman would allow some of the major distributors and comics shops in the US and Canada — like Bud Plant, Pacific Comics, Sea Gate, Styx Comics Service, etc. — to handle their books, the sales quite possibly could increase.

Granted, there are problems, since the books are bagged, but maybe the comic shops would sell them in the bag or individually. Whatever the solution, contact the comic shops and direct sales outlets on a much wider basis than is being done today. Let the comic shops decide the best way to sell the books.

Perhaps then, you'd get more adults reading the comics along with the kids.

Harlan Krissoff
184 Kearny Ave
Perth Amboy, NJ 08861

NOISY SLAPSTICK

Dear Mr. Kraft,

Congratulations on the first issue of COMICS INTERVIEW, which I enjoyed very much. I especially liked the interview with **Steve Gerber,** although you may not believe me as I take exception to some of his remarks:

Gerber asserts that child psychologists and groups like Action for Children's Television have censored Children's Television and among other things, brought about ". . . the punk-rock generation, with its violence, its ennui, its disdain of emotion, and its complete absence of faith in the future."

What?

First of all, I'm a children's television producer at KDKA-TV in Pittsburgh and Westinghouse Broadcasting (Group W) nationally. Among other things, I produced a documentary called SPIDER-MAN ON THE MOVE, which neatly combined my interests in children's programs and comics. Unlike many of my colleagues, I got into TV in the first place by way of my work with Action for Children's TV — an organization that has bent over backwards to avoid advocating or condoning censorship. What ACT has always promoted is greater diversity in children's programs.

Children's TV is a microcosm of commercial TV in general. Whereas the economic realities of broadcast commercial TV are harsh in general, in children's television, the economics are dismal. By definition, children's TV reduces the size of the target audience and is therefore a losing proposition in an industry where ratings measure not only audience reached, but ominously, audience missed. Networks used to redress that imbalance by doubling the number of ads permitted on Saturday morning, as compared with prime time. Prior to the advent of ACT, ads had reached a record 16 minutes of every hour. And the shows? They were a parody of the "lowest common denominator" theory of programming. Noisy slapstick chases and pointless mindless violence were the norm. Character or plot development were completely non-existent.

It is not ACT, or the many responsible research studies, which brought about bowdlerized children's television. It is the network's shallow response to responsible criticism. No psychologist or child development expert ever concluded that the sight of the Human Torch in flames would promote an epidemic of fiery self-immolation among young viewers. It takes a network standards and practices person to generate that kind of thinking.

Nevertheless, until the Reagan administration's FCC made the threat of required programming for children a forgotten memory, ACT and its supporters did succeed in pressuring networks to increase the number of kids shows and, in my view, improve their overall quality. I can't believe that **Gerber,** or any other comic fan, would prefer the mindless Hanna-Barbera FANTASTIC FOUR, produced in pre-ACT 1967, to the current HULK or SPIDER-MAN AND HIS HIS AMAZING FRIENDS produced by Marvel Productions. Despite the limitations of Saturday morning, Marvel is turning out some of the most thoughtful and complex characterizations ever seen

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From "Role Model" by Gerber & Mayerik.

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

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in TV animation.

I could go on. For example, the psychological literature on TV and violence is highly specific about the kinds of programs shown to kids and the kinds of "aggressive" behavior it tends to generate. What those studies can't show — neither can ACT — is how to make a better children's program. That takes talent. Something **Gerber** has plenty of. I hope he resolves some of his frustrations with children's programming. Whether they appreciate it or not, the networks need him. And so do young audiences.

Arthur Greenwald
5645 Hempstead Road
Apartment 2
Pittsburgh, PA 15217

TOP DOG?

Dear Dave,

Even after two issues I can't *really* say COMICS INTERVIEW is "the best magazine about comics." Still, it *is* pretty close. Why don't you give yourself more time — say, another issue or two — 'til you declare yourself #1?

Actually, I've really enjoyed both issues so far. I guess I'm really not an up-to-date '80s fan, since I enjoyed the **Gerber** and **Evanier** interviews *much more* than your cover features. Ah well.

As far as suggestions go, I've got two: **Jack Kirby** and **Steve Ditko**! Just a short 50-page interview with either one of 'em would be fine.

It's funny how often their names turned up in your first two issues, for two artists who aren't "hot."

Anyway, good luck. You're certainly on your way to being the top magazine on comics. Issues like the first two — or the presses breaking in Menomonee Falls — will make you top dog.

Joe Frank
4425 N 78th St #260B
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

VERY IMPRESSIVE

Dear David,

It is very encouraging to see that your second issue of COMICS INTERVIEW is just as good — if not better — than your first. The coverage of **Frank Miller's** new RONIN series was very impressive. I thoroughly appreciated the chance to look at some of his early sketches from RONIN #2 as well as some finished panels from #1. It was also nice to see a couple of recent pictures of Frank, to get an idea of what he looks like.

The **George Roussos** interview was also very much appreciated. I have always thought of him as a high-quality colorist, but I never knew that he used to be an artist for RIPLEY'S BELIEVE IT OR NOT, not to mention an assistant for the legendary **Bob Kane**. Maybe I'm just not old enough.

Anyway, I think COMICS INTERVIEW is great! I wish you luck, and I can't wait for #3 with **Craig Russell** and **Howard Chaykin.**

Eric Wagner
199 Amherst Ave.
Des Plains, IL 60016

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More unseen art by Neal Adams from FLUIDE GLACIAL #80.

NOT A KIRBY FAN

David,

I hope I will be able to afford all issues with your new frequency; of all fanzines, I buy only COMICS SCENE and COMICS INTERVIEW — so there should be no problem. Number 2 was even better than #1. My favorites were the **Miller, Evanier,** and (gasp) **Simmons** interviews. I'm not a **Kirby** fan, although I enjoy his Fourth World Trilogy and regard THE DEMON as his best — it is one of my all-time favorite series. As far as **Gene Simmons** goes, I find him to be a unique and interesting person, judging from this and other interviews. (And hey, don't we all like it loud?) Here's to a long and healthy run!

Keith A Bowden
1808 Grandaddy Rd
Lawrenceburg, TN 38464

GOOD STUFF

Dear Dave,

The only problem with changing the schedule from two months to one is that you put so much good stuff in one issue I barely have time to read it all. Whatever you do *please* don't go bi-weekly like AMAZING HEROES.

In the future, I'd like to see some of the people who got Marvel and DC started interviewed. People like **Don Heck, Steve Ditko** (if you can find him), **Julius Schwartz,** etc. I also would like to hear what the alternative companies have to say (First, Eclipse, Capital, Red Circle).

From which logos does the first "I," "R," and the second "E" come from? I can place all the other letters as having come from THE FANTASTIC FOUR, THOR, CAPTAIN AMERICA, THE AVENGERS, IRON MAN and WOLVERINE.

I like the size and format of this magazine. I can put it in a comic box with my other comics. Not only does the format allow for bigshot names like **Miller,** but it also makes room for lesser known people like **Jim Novak, Steve Oliff,** and **George Roussos,** who are ignored by other fanzines. I also like the picture that comes with each interview. It's great to actually see what these people really look like. Keep up the good work!

David Lipson
5432 S Ingleside
Chicago, IL 60615

DON'T WANT TO KILL MYSELF

Dear Mr Kraft,

Reading through COMICS INTERVIEW #3, I discovered **D. Jon Zimmerman** on French comics. What *really* interested me, though, is the **Neal Adams** art that you printed. I am *a fanatic* **Neal Adams** fan, trying to get a hold of everything he ever did. I have never heard of or seen Neal's French art, but it looks incredible! Now that I know of the existence of this **Adams** art in FLUIDE GLACIAL #80, I don't know how long I can live knowing of its existence, and yet not having a copy.

Please! Anything you can do for me

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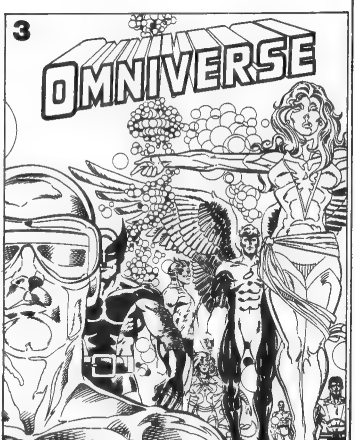

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would be greatly appreciated. I *don't* want to kill myself!

Neal Underweiser
6177 S Iola Way
Englewood, CO 80111

Well, Neal, while I can't tell you how to get back issues of French comics without picking them up in Paris like D. Jon Zimmerman, I've had quite a few queries on the subject of the Adams' art — so I'm printing your letter in the hopes that someone out there can suggest a source. Happy hunting!

— DAK

WOLFMAN STUPID & RUDE

Dear DAK:

You'd think with the endless interviews **Marv Wolfman** does, he'd eventually get good at it. I found COMICS INTERVIEW's chat with **Wolfman** to be the low point of your issues so far.

There are assorted problems with his answers. First is Marv's trumpeting in print "his" idea about, for instance: a "love" comic like DALLAS (which is in preparation — and an open secret — elsewhere in the industry) and treating WONDER WOMAN like THOR (which has been a recurrent suggestion about that series for at least ten years that I know of — and especially annoying from a former *editor* of WW, who made no moves to accomplish anything like it while he was in charge of the book).

My major problem with **Wolfman's** self-promotion, however, is that he frequently attempts it by downgrading the work of others. A typical example occurs in your interview. **Wolfman**, fresh from complaining in another interview that *other* writers' versions of Superman (undoubtably **Bates'**) are too involved with puzzle stories to allow the title character to really cut loose with his powers, complains in COMICS INTERVIEW that Superman is too powerful to write stories for, and that *other* writers' Superman is so powerful, he's never really had to think his way out of any problem. Isn't this two sides of the same question? Isn't **Wolfman** aware that over ten years worth of **Bates'** Superman stories have *been* puzzle stories in which the most powerful man on Earth has to exercise his super-*intelligence* to harness the right powers at the right time? That aspect of **Bates'** work has led to the somewhat justified accusations that Superman never *does* "cut loose," but still, **Wolfman** is asserting that Superman stories (pre-**Wolfman**) by *other* writers were both overly-cerebral for an action feature *and* starred a character who solved all his cases through "punch(ing) through a mountain with (his) head." This is poor, self-serving analysis. And it is also a slap in the face to **Bates, Wolfman's** competition as a Superman writer. It's incoherent, contradictory, stupid and rude.

When **Wolfman** protested that OMEGA MEN is not for kids because "(DC is) selling it direct sales," someone should have pointed out to him that the *not-returnable sales route* status of the book has *no* connection with to whom it will be sold — not a single documentable thing!

Dennis Perado
(on the road — currently Denver)

FABULOUS MAGAZINE

Dear DAK:
Okay, here goes —

I — ARCHIE
N — FANTASTIC FOUR (original)
T — THOR
E — CAPTAIN AMERICA
R — SUPERBOY
V — AVENGERS (original)
I — IRON MAN
E — ADVENTURE COMICS (script)
W — WEREWOLF BY NIGHT

Howzat? So do I win a Know Prize, or what?

Valentino
11900 Oertley Circle
Garden Grove, CA 92641

PS: This is a *fabulous* magazine!

UP TO THE MINUTE

Dear Mr. Kraft,

I like your COMICS INTERVIEW a lot. I have two requests. My first one is to have your interviews more "up to the minute." I really liked your interview with **Dick Goldwater** in issue #3, and I hope in issues to come you have more interviews with alternate comics personel (how about **Sergio Aragones**).

Ari Staiman
70 West 95th Street
New York, NY 10025

I'm happy to say that your first request is already in effect, Ari — COMICS INTERVIEW features some of the most "up to the minute" interviews being published about comics. We were especially proud of last issue's Marv Wolfman interview, which was conducted only a few weeks before it appeared on the newsstands. That's the kind of inside-the-industry fast action you can expect from COMICS INTERVIEW. As for your second request, you can be sure that it, too, is already granted — the evidence being the ELFQUEST and D'ARC TANGENT and Comico interview-features we have lined up for the next couple issues. We aim to please, Ari!

— DAK

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